

Contact: Kara Nesimiuk
+974 4454 8490
karan@qatar.cmu.edu

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Nour Adbelnasser
+974 7021 8260
nour@bljworldwide.com

Students from across the region compete in annual Carnegie Mellon Hackathon

New category challenged students to find technological solutions to humanitarian issues

DOHA, Qatar: Students from across Qatar, as well as eight from Kuwait, one from India and one from Australia, came to Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q) for the annual CarnegieApps Hackathon. A total of 55 students on 15 teams participated in the 24-hour programming competition held at the CMU-Q campus in Education City.

Hackathon 2017 was sponsored by Education Above All (EAA), Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI) and Cosette Solutions, who provided judges, mentors and prizes for the event. Hackathon is an annual event where university students work around the clock to develop software for an innovative game, mobile application or web application using software of their choice.

The event is organized by students with guidance from associate professor of information systems **Dan Phelps**: "The CarnegieApps Hackathon is an opportunity for students to demonstrate everything they have learned to identify, tackle one of the challenges the sponsors are experiencing, and apply their skills to help solve that problem in a real world context."

This year, Hackathon featured a new award category in humanitarian technology. Sponsored by Education Above All's program, Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC), the category challenged students to develop technology solutions to different humanitarian issues across the globe. PEIC's academic advisory director, **Maleiha Malik**, attended the closing ceremony.

Haya Thowfeek, a graduate of CMU-Q information systems who now works as an information management officer at EAA, said her organization believes in tapping into young minds to develop viable and meaningful solutions to some of the challenges facing NGOs.

"EAA is currently working on a project called the Global Data Service that aims to create a central hub of information with data on the number of attacks on education. This will assist in the EAA/PEIC mandate of advocacy in defence of the right to education," she said. "The data service will be used to raise awareness of attacks on education, promote legal action and create response measures in the conflict zones. As a systems developer, and a CMU-Q alumna,, I knew that students would be able to come up with innovative solutions that will contribute to the success of our project."

The winning team in the new category created an algorithm that collects data using web-crawling, databases, and Google and Twitter trends. The algorithm creates a confidence level for each event, visualizes it using mapping tools, and creates a predictive model which highlights regions where an attack was possible. This would allow organizations such as EAA to contact agencies near those conflict zones to offer assistance.

Carnegie Mellon University Qatar

QCRI sent two judges to the event: **Hassan Sajjad**, scientist, and **Yasser Makram**, senior software developer. Makram commented, “There is a great energy during the Hackathon, I have seen a lot of potential during the competition, students are enthusiastic and driven to develop real-life solutions to some of the most pressing global challenges.”

Omar Shamiyeh, CEO of Cosette Solutions and a CMU-Q information systems graduate, also judged the event: “It is an honor for my company to be one of the sponsors of the CarnegieApps Hackathon. Our organization believes technology can be used to positively impact people’s lives, which is the most valuable thing in the world. Cosette Solutions fully supports technological innovation that makes use of simple apps that are able to make a big impact.”

The teams at this event represented CMU-Q, the College of the North Atlantic – Qatar, Qatar University, and Gulf University of Science and Technology and Kuwait University. This is the first time a university outside of Qatar has sent teams to the event.

Awards:

Best Humanitarian Technology: **Shahan Ali Memon, Syed Mehdi, Ibrahim Soltan and Sharjeel Khan** from CMU-Q

Best Overall App: **Maher Khan, Mohammed Fituri, Yasser El-Sayed and AbdulRahman Alfayad** from CMU-Q

Best Rookie Team: **Muhammad Nahin Khan, Kaustubh Ayer, Maimoon Siddiqui and Hanna Farooq Moazam**, CMU-Q

Best Design: **Ahmad Alfulaij, Osama Aljassar, Hamad Waleed and Abdullah Almunayae** from the Gulf University of Science and Technology and Kuwait University

Best Technical Challenge: **Aliaa Essameldin, Sabit Hassan, Aisha Mohamed and Shaden Shaar** from CMU-Q

Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar is accepting applications for the fall 2017 semester. For more information, visit www.qatar.cmu.edu.

ENDS

About Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar

For more than a century, Carnegie Mellon University has challenged the curious and passionate to imagine and deliver work that matters. A private, global university, Carnegie Mellon stands among the world’s most renowned educational institutions, setting its own course with programs that inspire creativity and collaboration. Consistently top-ranked, Carnegie Mellon has more than 13,000 students and 100,000 alumni worldwide.

At the invitation of Qatar Foundation, Carnegie Mellon joined Education City in 2004 to deliver select programs that will support and contribute to the long-term development of Qatar. Today, Carnegie Mellon Qatar offers undergraduate programs in biological sciences, business administration, computational biology, computer science, and information systems. More than 400 students from 40 countries call Carnegie Mellon Qatar home.

Carnegie Mellon University Qatar

Graduates from CMU-Q are highly sought-after: most choose careers in top organizations, both in Qatar and around the world, while a significant number pursue graduate studies at international institutions. With nine graduating classes, the total number of alumni is 570.

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Twitter: @CarnegieMellonQ

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About Education Above All:

- Education Above All (EAA) is a global initiative founded in 2012 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar.
- It aims to build a global movement which fosters development, with a particular focus on areas affected by poverty, conflict and disaster, the needs of children, and the empowerment of youth and women.
- EAA is the umbrella organisation overseeing three core programmes: Educate a Child, Al Fakhoora and Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC), as well as one special project, the Kakuma Project.
- For more information, visit educationaboveall.org, follow us on [twitter @EAA_Foundation](https://twitter.com/EAA_Foundation), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/EAA_Foundation) and [Instagram @educationaboveall_eaa](https://www.instagram.com/educationaboveall_eaa)

About Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict:

- PEIC was founded by Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser in 2009 to promote and protect the right to education in areas affected by crisis, conflict and insecurity.
- PEIC focuses on strengthening the international legal framework that protects education and schools from attack during conflict as well as promoting the values of the rule of law, including the right to education.
- PEIC brings together practitioners and specialists in education, international law and child protection together to protect the right to education.
- An estimated 36% of out-of-school children are living in conflict-affected areas.
- 1 million young people are missing out on meaningful opportunities for learning and skills development in these contexts.