

Carnegie Mellon University Qatar

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22 May, 2016

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Carnegie Mellon Qatar hosts first ‘Alice Middle East’ Programming Competition

DOHA, QATAR – Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar held the region’s inaugural ‘Alice Middle East’ programming competition, hosting 148 students from nine independent and international schools in Qatar.

To showcase the success of the Alice Middle East program, CMU-Q held a programming competition for participating schools. The event received widespread support from industry and government, with Qatar National Research Fund, the Ministry of Education, Qatar University, Qatar Computing Research Institute and Qatar Airways contributing experts to the judging panel.

Commercial Bank generously donated prizes for all eight winning teams.

Students created projects in Alice in five different categories: environment, sports, entertainment, transportation and social values. On May 8, they came together at CMU-Q to present their projects to the judges, whose scores were based on creativity of the idea, oral presentation, visual and smooth motion, modularity and algorithm design, and use of the camera, sound and motion controls.

“Alice Middle East is an excellent resource to introduce computational thinking to young people, who will need these crucial problem-solving skills when they enter the workforce,” said Ilker Baybars, dean and CEO of CMU-Q.

‘Alice’ is software that guides students through a 3D interactive world, teaching them the fundamental skills of programming and computational thinking. Created at the main Carnegie Mellon campus by Randy Pausch, professor of computer science, human-computer interaction and design, Alice came to the attention of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, at Pausch’s untimely death in 2008. At her request, CMU-Q developed a Middle Eastern version that incorporates the culture and traditions of Qatar.

Alice Middle East was created with support from Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), who has funded the project since 2012. The Qatar Ministry of Education and Higher Education has been instrumental in distributing the program to schools where teachers can use it as a tool to teach the computer science curriculum.

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Saquib Razak, associate teaching professor of computer science, leads the Alice Middle East project: “Because these students are so imaginative and they are using the Alice software in ways I hadn’t even thought of before, I got to learn a few new things from these projects myself. This is very positive as we look to expand Alice Middle East in the coming years.”

The top five winning teams were from Al Khor International School, Middle East International School, Al Arqam Academy for Girls, Mesaieed International School, and Arwa Bint Abd Almotaleb School for Girls.

Three special prizes were awarded to a team from Mohamed Bin Abdel Wahab School for Boys in the category of most creative idea, a team from Al Arqam Academy School for Girls for best design, and a team from Omar Bin Al-Khattab School for Boys for best presentation.

To experience Alice Middle East, please visit: <http://alice.qatar.cmu.edu/> to download the program.

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About Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar

For more than a century, Carnegie Mellon University has been an innovator in education, with programs that inspire creativity, collaborate across disciplines and educate some of the world’s most influential thinkers. Consistently top ranked, Carnegie Mellon has more than 13,000 students, 100,000 alumni and 5,000 faculty and staff globally. Nineteen Nobel Laureates and 12 Turing Award winners have called CMU home.

At the invitation of Qatar Foundation, Carnegie Mellon joined Education City in 2004. Education City is a groundbreaking center for scholarship and research that is the ideal complement to Carnegie Mellon’s mission and vision.

Carnegie Mellon Qatar offers undergraduate programs in biological sciences, business administration, computational biology, computer science, and information systems. Students from than 37 countries enroll at our world-class campus.

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