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PRESS RELEASE  
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### **Carnegie Mellon students travel to India, develop technology for the blind**

DOHA, QATAR – A group of students from Carnegie Mellon University have been given a remarkable opportunity to conduct technology research projects in India that benefit the visually impaired. Eight students are spending the summer in Bangalore after being selected to join the 2013 iSTEP (innovative Student Technology ExPerience) internship.

iSTEP is a unique summer research internship program that provides the opportunity to conduct technology research projects in underserved communities around the world. The 2013 team is working on several projects that support blind students who are learning to write Braille. They are further developing the software device connected to a computer that allows blind students to learn the placement of the different dots in a Braille cell.

Aveed Sheikh, a business administration student at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar and his fellow Pittsburgh teammates, Madeleine Clute, Maddie Gioffre, Poornima Kaniarasu, Aditya Kodkany, Vivek Nair, Shree Lakshmi Rao and Avia Weinstein, have moved to Bangalore for the summer months and are working in partnership with the Mathru Educational Trust for the Blind.

“It is a wonderful learning experience to work with a multi-talented international CMU team to make a positive difference,” said Aveed Sheikh.

The Mathru Educational Trust for the Blind includes the Mathru School for the Blind, which is a non-profit and voluntary institution founded in 2001 to educate and rehabilitate visually impaired children and adults. In 2011, the Trust launched a new center educating children who are deaf and/or have multiple disabilities.

“Mathru is an inspirational partner, we have relished working with the staff dedicated to teaching differently-abled students,” said Shree Lakshmi Rao, another iSTEP intern.

Blind students can also learn to write braille through different games and exercise using a slate and stylus. The device provides instant audio feedback based on the user’s input and also corrects mistakes. The interns are working on enhancing existing modes on the Braille Writing Tutor (BWT) software by introducing Kannada (local language) and Hindi Braille, in addition to Math.

In addition to software development, the students have been working with the Trust to conduct interviews, user experience tests, and analyzing data to fully understand the technology’s impact.

“Interacting directly with the staff and students at Mathru has helped me better learn and understand various perspectives. Everyone here has a unique life story to tell, which makes my work even more interesting,” said Aveed Sheikh.

جامعة كارنيغي ميلور في قطر  
**Carnegie Mellon University Qatar**

The interns will assess the needs of the new multi-disability center and handover the results to the iSTEP 2014 team, who are planning to return to Bangalore next summer to work with the Mathru Educational Trust on new projects. The team's CMU education has placed them in good stead to excel during their internship.

iSTEP was created in 2009 by CMU research group [TechBridgeWorld](#), and is designed to give interns real-world experiences. "Thanks to TechBridgeWorld and CMU, I have been given the opportunity to travel to India for this amazing internship. CMU equips me with the skills required to do well and TechBridgeWorld allowed me to use them to make a difference," said Avia Weinstein a rising senior at CMU's Pittsburgh campus.

Follow the iSTEP 2013's journey in India by reading their daily [blog](#), liking their [Facebook](#) page, following their updates on [Twitter](#) and watching their videos on [YouTube](#).

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In 2004, Qatar Foundation invited Carnegie Mellon to join Education City, a groundbreaking center for scholarship and research. Students from more than 40 different countries enroll at our world-class facilities in Education City.

Carnegie Mellon Qatar offers undergraduate programs in biological sciences, business administration, computational biology, computer science and information systems. Carnegie Mellon is firmly committed to Qatar's National Vision 2030 by developing people, society, the economy and the environment.