



## Alexandria University Teaches Entrepreneurship Skills to Prepare Students for the Labor Market in Egypt



Alexandria University (AU) is the second largest university in Egypt with 160,000 students and 6,000 faculty members. AU holds 23 faculties and institutes with two additional branches in Chad and South Sudan. AU's mission is to prepare graduates to assume leadership positions in all sectors. In Egypt, the public sector is by far the largest employer in the country, but they cannot absorb all of the graduates coming into the labor market. Many young people are turning to entrepreneurship to create economic opportunity and also to address social challenges.

The President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, recently spoke about the need for entrepreneurship skills, saying, "The challenges witnessed by the global economy obligate us to continue cooperation between governments and the private sector to encourage and develop entrepreneurship in Africa, and unify efforts seeking to enable young people in our continent, providing them with the possibilities that unleash their abilities in creation."

President Sisi's vision is to support and enable the youth, especially in the field of entrepreneurship. As a result, all of Egypt's institutions have been directed to launch training programs to qualify youth before entering the world of entrepreneurship.

The AU Career Development Center & Entrepreneurship (CDCE) opened two years

ago and aims to help undergraduate students and alumni develop career-ready skills. They provide high quality resources, services, and programming to that end.

Dr. Mohamed Belal, CDCE Executive Manager, said, "Our challenge is to change the mindset of students in our University. The current job market leads to many of our graduates becoming self-employed, but they need the skills to handle that task. We have taken the



President's direction seriously and want to start training our students on these skills as quickly as possible."

Dr. Essam A. Elkordi, AU President, adds, "Every student needs to understand entrepreneurship. Every student needs to be able to convert their idea into a business."

As AU and the CDCE set out to change the mindset of their students and focus more on the possibility of starting their own business upon graduation, they sought a curriculum to teach career planning and entrepreneurship.

### Finding an Entrepreneurship Curriculum to Prepare AU Students for Success

After deciding to move forward immediately with developing an entrepreneurship curriculum at AU, Dr. Belal met a representative from Certiport, a global certification exam provider, and learned about their Entrepreneurship and Small Business (ESB) certification. ESB teaches entrepreneurial concepts and prepares students to pursue additional postsecondary training or enter the small business sector immediately upon graduation with an international validation of their skills.

"When our faculty looked at the Certiport ESB curriculum, we found it to be very professional," said Dr. Belal. "We were confident it would give our students the entrepreneurial skills we wanted to teach, and we decided to offer the ESB curriculum and certification at our University."

First AU set up a Certiport Authorized Testing Center, or computer lab, to administer exams. Next, they held a training course for 78 professors to prepare them to teach the entrepreneurship course.

Most of the faculty have no prior knowledge or background in entrepreneurship, so the training is a large undertaking. Dr. Walid M. Eid, an assistant professor at AU and Chairman of Skills Plus Egypt, taught the workshop, and it was very well received. Dr. Eid is the local representative for ESB certification, and he has been essential to the starting of the program at AU. He developed curriculum for the University and gave it to them for a successful launch.

"Dr. Eid is very proficient and even though the training is very hard for our faculty, we had positive feedback," said Dr. Belal.

"In Egypt the awareness of entrepreneurship is very low so that is why AU wants to increase that knowledge and train their teachers to become proficient in this area," said Dr. Eid. "I believe this program will change the mindset of both faculty and students at AU towards entrepreneurship."

After the first workshop, each staff member who was trained on ESB was required to teach a minimum of 20 students as part of a pilot program. The students were taken randomly from each of AU's colleges.

### Next Up: Full Rollout

At the end of the term CDCE plans to examine each faculty member and their success in teaching ESB and choose the best of them to teach a course at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, when the program will officially launch. Dr. Eid will train another group of faculty over the summer as well. CDCE's goal is to teach the entrepreneurship curriculum to 16,000 students in the first year of the program. Due to the large student population, eventually



they would need to open a Certiport Authorized Testing Center at each college on campus to meet demand for ESB certification.

Dr. Hesham Gaber, AU Vice-President for Education and Student Affairs adds, "In order to meet President Elkordi's goals, we have decided to make the entrepreneurship course obligatory for all students at Alexandria University."

Dr. Eid and Skills Plus Egypt are also supporting entrepreneurship at AU by creating a demo day at the end of each semester when they connect students with business ideas to investors and incubators. At the same time, they are launching the Alexandria University Venture Lab, which is a work space specializing in mentorship for potential entrepreneurs.

"We believe these other activities, combined with the ESB program at Alexandria University, will make a very large impact in preparing youth in Egypt to be successful as entrepreneurs in both the local and international labor market," said Dr. Eid.

Dr. Eid hopes to replicate the successful launch of the ESB program at other Universities in Egypt after the model created at AU.

**ESB**  Entrepreneurship and Small Business