

SUCCESS STORY

Entrepreneurship Training Inspires Jordanian Graduate to Design Dream Job U.S.-Jordan Education Partnership Fosters an Entrepreneurship Mindset Across All Disciplines *Washtenaw Community College and William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan /Al Quds College*



Photo courtesy of Al Quds College

Bilal Salman, a Class of 2013 Al Quds College graduate, shows his excitement about being among the first cohort of Quds Business Incubator tenants in Jordan.

“This business, it’s my baby. I want to have the freedom to make decisions and use my imagination to make it the best.”

—Bilal Salman, graduate of Al Quds College in Jordan

Bilal Salman was a typical student attending Al Quds College (AQC) in Amman, Jordan. He planned to graduate from college with a degree in interior design and find work in the industry. He spent his days studying and in the evenings and on weekends he worked at a local home and furniture store. Bilal demonstrated talent in his field so his teachers recommended him to employers while he was still studying. Soon he began designing window displays for various retailers at Taj Mall in Amman. Through customer word-of-mouth marketing, one window display drew the admiration of customers—who became repeat customers. He began doing design work for weddings, home design, and landscaping. All the appreciation had Bilal hoping for a job offer upon graduation.

By summer 2012, Bilal joined a new program at AQC that Bilal says, “helps students create jobs instead of getting jobs.” The program, Community College Entrepreneurship: Integration to Incubation began at AQC in January 2012 from a partnership between AQC, Washtenaw Community College and William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan, both in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Funded by U.S. Agency for International Development through Higher Education for Development, the program’s objective is to teach AQC students the skills necessary to start their own business.

During the 2012-2013 academic year, his final year at AQC, Bilal participated in as many entrepreneurship activities as he could. He attended lectures by local entrepreneurs, joined the student entrepreneur club, took classes in entrepreneurship and, eventually, became one of the first student tenants of the Quds Business Incubator. Bilal, along with five other students, joined the incubator for six months to continue developing their entrepreneurial skills. For Bilal, the entrepreneurial training gave him legitimacy with his peers, family, and customers and ignited other ideas for businesses outside of his major. He developed a business plan for a year-round food court concept with healthy food packaged in an aesthetically pleasing way. His idea gained a lot of attention in the local community, including from funders. Bilal has decided that he doesn’t want a donation. Instead, he is dedicated to working in the design field so that he can raise the money necessary to start the food court business. “This business, it’s my baby. I want to have the freedom to make decisions and use my imagination to make it the best,” he said. Since his 2013 graduation, Bilal has worked abroad and plans to return to Jordan and start his food court business.

Bilal’s colleagues are sure he will continue to have more entrepreneurial ideas and that he will put those ideas into action. Quds Business Incubator Manager Sara Al-Jabsheh said, “Bilal is a perfect example of the lifelong changes in attitude this program encourages in students.” Bilal started college at AQC because he thought it would help him secure a job. Now Bilal is traveling and working for himself with the ultimate goal of starting a business.

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