

Student wins Berkeley competition for vegan food proposal



Sofía Ahued Herrera, an **International Business** student at the [Tec's Santa Fe campus](#), was among the winners of the **Collider Cup** at the **University of California, Berkeley**.

The **senior student** and her team won **second place** in the competition for their proposal to **replace animal protein with seaweed** to make **vegan products**.

The [Collider Cup](#) is an **entrepreneurship** competition and showcase organized by **Berkeley**, where university students present their **business proposals** to a panel of **professors, investors, and experts**.

Winners have the **opportunity to obtain funding** to develop their start-up company.



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Designing the food of the future

The opportunity came to her during her **exchange at Berkeley** because she enrolled in the **'Global Solutions for Food Systems' class** when choosing her subjects.

In this class, she and her team had to work on a proposal for Nestlé using a seaweed-based component to replace animal protein for vegan products.

"We were asked for a method to extract this protein practically and cost-effectively, so we tried many things in the lab," she explained.

Sofía shares that her **love of cooking** and trying new things led her to take on this **new challenge**, as it's a class primarily for **STEM areas**.

"It was something new. I'd never been in a lab taking measurements before, so it was fun, but challenging as well," she said.

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After months of trial and error and feeling that they were not making progress in the lab, Sofía and her team **tried cooking with a Thermomix** and different **types of seaweed**.

Ultimately, they prepared the seaweed as a **gel to replace eggs** when **baking bread, brownies, and other products**.

*“After all those months of frustration, we said, ‘**We have to deliver something to the professor or she’s going to fail us,**’” she said.*

*“Replacing the egg with the gel meant it acted as a **plant-based food,**” she added.*



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Leaving a lasting impression at Berkeley

As a result of their **vegan protein** proposal, the Tec student and her multidisciplinary team **were selected to present the project at the Berkeley Collider Cup**.

*“I’d never heard of this competition and **didn’t realize how high the standard was.**”*

*“There were some very intelligent people with **years of experience working on their startups,**” she said.*

This was when the real challenge began for Sofía, as competing meant **developing a solid business proposal** for the product they had created.

As **the only business student on the team**, Sofia took the lead for developing and presenting the proposal during the competition

“I’m very happy. I never imagined something like this would happen.”

“Coming from Mexico and not being part of Berkeley, I felt more pressure and committed myself to deliver something of quality,” she said.

Sofía and her team won **second place** in the competition and received the **People’s Choice Award**.

“I’m very happy. I never imagined something like this would happen,” she said.

She credited her **success in the competition** to the negotiation and entrepreneurship training **she gained from her classes at the Tec**.

“Those practical classes helped me shape my idea.



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“No one did this for us. I made decisions based on what I’d learned; it was imagination and creativity,” she said.

Finally, Sofia highlighted that she would like to **develop her vegan food proposal in Mexico in the future.**

*“It’s something I’m **passionate** about and I think that’s what helped us win; the audience could feel our excitement.*

*“After all, **plant-based food is the future** and it looks very promising,” she concluded.*

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