Student wins Berkeley competition for vegan food proposal



Sofía Ahued Herrera, an **International Business** student at the <u>Tec's Santa Fe campus</u>, 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 <u>Collider Cup</u> 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."

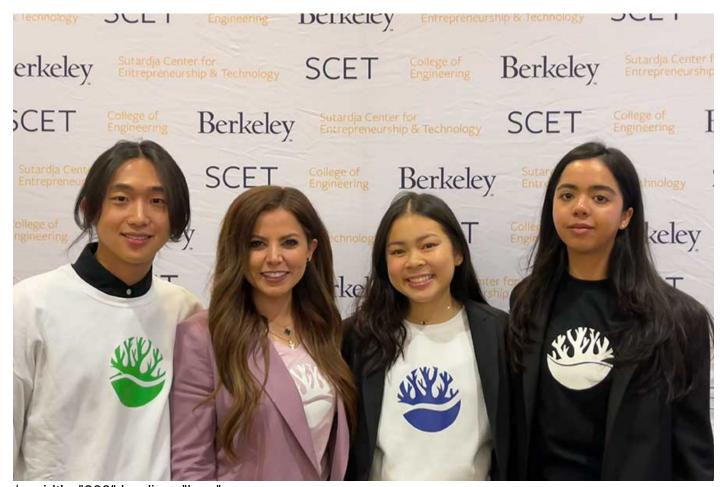
"Coming from Mexico and not being part of Berkeley, I felt more pressure and committed myself to deliver something of quality," she said.

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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