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Course Report

SPARK Biomedical Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Course 2021

Course contents and structure

The course lasted two weeks, and each day included the lectures and workshop time, where we brainstormed our team project. The lectures varied in format from more classic to more interactive game-type, e.g. “From bench to marketplace” by Michael Wallach, which was arranged as a roleplay where participants took part in “creating” a drug and Michael asked the questions and shared the information about the organization side of the product development process in a form of advice during the game. Each lecture was packed with priceless knowledge about the research and business side, as well as the philosophy behind the SPARK work. I personally was happy to receive so many practical tips, that I can apply to my day-to-day research life.

Team project

The main project for each team was to create a marketable invention and present it to the participants and mentors. Students were divided into 12 groups, and each group brought together participants from different Universities or countries. My teammates were three brilliant young researchers from Taiwan, who work in nanotechnologies, medicinal chemistry, rehabilitation psychology. Together we were assigned to brainstorm a new drug or medical device technology, which is to help solving some existing medical problem. We were encouraged to pick an issue, that would be outside of our fields of expertise, which made the challenge even more interesting. Everyday Michael or Isabella joined our

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workshop to give us a chance to present our progress and share advice. I very much enjoyed the dynamic discussions, incredible team cooperation, and kind yet demanding approach of our mentors.

On the second week we had a small pitch and a final pitch, where we introduced our team and our product design and information, including the proof-of-concept, marketing strategy, financial plan, etc., as if we were pitching for the potential investors. We were also asked to perform a patent research and draft an application. Our product consisted of a sophisticated EEG device and AI software, meant to help women dealing with postpartum depression. All the teams showed incredible results with beautiful presentations, which speaks high of our mentors as well. I want to note how much I am glad that the pitch required all of the teammates to present a piece of the pitch, and overall, Michael and Isabella pushed all of the participants to be involved and challenge ourselves by emphasizing the importance of practice, asking “silly” questions and entertaining “impossible” ideas.

Personal insights:

This was my first time participating in a SPARK course, and the experience exceeded my expectations. Due to the virtual format, we did not get to have as much networking experience, but it gave an opportunity to focus on the course contents in a comfortable environment. The atmosphere of the acceptance and opened conversations with lecturers helped me to overcome the initial intimidation around the highly accomplished professionals, and get the most knowledge, skills and joy I could from the course.

Participating in this course fulfilled all my goals: I practiced presentation every day, learned the financial planning, got insights into marketing strategies, learned tips for an effective communication of my ideas. Moreover, I could practice different approaches to working with a diverse team and learn simple and effective leadership techniques. Time limits on the tasks that at first seemed impossible to meet pushed us to use so much of creative and

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critical thinking, set the priorities on the tasks, and divide the work in the most effective ways.

I personally would recommend every student to take this course, and hope that the partnership of SPARK and T-CReDo will grow and evolve.

I would like to express my gratitude to the SPARK team, the lecturers who took time to share their priceless knowledge with us. Michael and Isabella, who maintained a great working atmosphere and gave us so many helpful tips.

I am especially grateful to T-CReDo team, thank so whose work I was able to have this opportunity.

Extra gratitude to Miyazawa-san for organizing our participation in the program.