

In the Press

Since its inception, Hooking Book™ has garnered attention and awards from the inventor and entrepreneur community. Some of the press coverage is included here to show the progression of the invention so far.

As seen on



Alumna Develops Products— and Scholarships

They say invention is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration, and Rania El-Sorogy, a 2007 graduate of the College of Commerce and a member of the Coleman Entrepreneurship Center's Advisory Board, can certainly vouch for that.



An academic standout during her years at DePaul—she earned her degree in just three years—El-Sorogy is driven by an entrepreneurial spirit expressed early in life and nurtured at DePaul through the Coleman Center. In fact, by the time the Barrington, Ill., native had enrolled as a freshman, she had developed some 40-odd new business ideas, all intended to provide practical solutions to everyday problems. One of those ideas became what was originally called Livre Libre, a flexible bookbinding system that allows users to remove only the chapters they need and leave the rest of the book at home—a real boon to students who have to haul heavy textbooks back and forth to class. Her business plan for Livre Libre won the 2007 regional Idea to Product collegiate entrepreneur competition sponsored by the University of Texas at Austin. Later that year, she took first place in the DePaul New Venture Challenge with the plan for a dance Web site called PulzArt.com, from which she had hoped ultimately to launch a dance-oriented cable television network. Along the way, she also sat on the boards of three nonprofit organizations and, in 2006, founded and served as co-president of Students for Entrepreneurs (S4E), a club devoted to raising scholarship money for DePaul students interested in entrepreneurship. She became interested in philanthropy after receiving a scholarship herself. According to El-Sorogy's co-president, Becca Berkenstadt, now a senior double-majoring in marketing and management (and also running her own social media consulting firm), S4E has distributed two (2) \$1,500 scholarships to entrepreneurial DePaul students over the past two years. Since her graduation, El-Sorogy has continued working to bring her original bookbinding concept—now called Hooking Book—to market, a process, she admits, that has taken a bit longer than she had expected. She attributes much of the delay to a lack of money, but adds that her shortage of cash may have been a blessing in disguise. “If I had had my druthers, I would have licensed the product three years ago,” she says. “But now, for a number of reasons, I’m glad I didn’t.” For one, time has afforded her the opportunity to network with members of the textbook publishing industry, the results of which have materialized in the form of four (4) new patents pending, a deeper understanding of book manufacturing and distribution and a better product. It’s also sharpened her problem-solving skills and her resourcefulness in stretching a buck. “I’ve gotten pretty good at building prototypes with duct tape, cardboard and Styrofoam,” she jokes. Her perseverance appears to be paying off, as Hooking Book has generated an increasingly positive buzz within the industry. The attention has spurred El-Sorogy to redouble her efforts on the project by putting other ventures on hold (PulzArt.com among them) and boosting her revenue by taking consulting jobs on a project-by-project basis.

For more information, visit the Hooking Book Web site at hookingbook.com.



NBC Chicago
Nightly News Feature
18 October 2007

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Crain's Chicago Business
She hits the books, and dance floor
17 September 2007

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21-year-old is never afraid of being the youngest in the room



Rania El-Sorogy won \$16,000 in three business plan competitions last spring.
Photo: John R. Boehm

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Next she offered her solution. What if the heavy textbooks were bound so that students could remove individual chapters and leave the rest of the bulk at home? The judges loved the idea, and her Livre Libre bookbinding system beat 26 other entries to win first prize in the Idea To Product Competition, sponsored by the University of Texas at Austin.

"I had a problem, and I tried to come up with a way to solve it," says Ms. El-Sorogy, 21, of the overstuffed backpack she lugged to high school in Barrington and later while commuting to DePaul University, where she graduated with a degree in business administration in June.

A compulsive idea-generator, she has notebooks full of business concepts. Some, like an online gift registry for more than just weddings, are still in their infancy. But two ideas — Livre Libre and a video-streaming Web site for dance enthusiasts — are on their way to fruition.

The two projects won Ms. El-Sorogy a total of \$16,000 in three business plan competitions in the spring. She's using the money, along with some funding from her mother, to start the companies.

In April 2006 she applied for a patent, which is pending, for Libre Livre when her 20th birthday prompted a panic because she hadn't yet launched any of her ideas. She's always been driven to solve a problem instead of waiting for someone else to do it for her, a quality she inherited from her mom, a bank executive who was the first in her family to attend college.

"Take pride in yourself, put yourself out there and be strong," Ms. El-Sorogy says of her mother's lessons. "People will know that you're an equal."

GOING PLACES

Since applying for the patent, Ms. El-Sorogy has surveyed high school and college students, toured bookbinding facilities and created a prototype that uses a tongue-and-groove system that connects paperback sections of a textbook into one hardcover. She has an alternative design that uses paperback sections that slide into each other.

Her plan is to license the design to publishers for a small percentage of each book's retail price. She wants to do a print run of a prototype this fall, which she'll take to colleges across the country to conduct more market research and promote the business.

Her dance Web site, PulzArt.com, grew out of her desire for more dance programming. A ballet, jazz and tap dancer since age 2, Ms. El-Sorogy first planned to start a cable channel. "If we can have one about food, we can have one about dance," she says.

But mentors in the industry convinced her it would be better to start with a Web site. The site, which she hopes to launch this fall, will be funded primarily by ads and will include profile pages where dancers and choreographers can post their biographies and video résumés.

April Lane, assistant director of the Coleman Entrepreneurship Center at DePaul, has worked closely with Ms. El-Sorogy on both ideas. She's watched Ms. El-Sorogy win over veteran entrepreneurs at networking events who didn't take her seriously at first because of her age.

"People start to think, 'Wow, this girl is really going someplace,' " Ms. Lane says.

For her part, Ms. El-Sorogy isn't intimidated by being the youngest person in the room, as well as one of the few women. Even as a little girl, she practiced the firm handshake her mother taught her and realized the grownups around her noticed.

"The best way to learn to be an entrepreneur is to try it and do it," she says.

DePaul Student wins Regional Idea to Product (I2P) Competition

Two DePaul student-entrepreneurs recently competed at the Regional Idea to Product (I2P) Competition hosted by Saint Louis University, with one of them winning first place.

Rania El-Sorrogy, senior in Commerce, and Justin Romo, sophomore in Commerce, are student-entrepreneurs who have been working on very different inventions. Justin has been working on a patent-pending virtual reality system that has a potential market in the high-tech and defense industries. Rania has a provisional patent for a bookbinding system for hardcover books, in which chapters can be removed and reinserted without affecting the overall strength.

Both students were pleased when their one-page summaries made the first cut of the competition, where twenty-six submissions were whittled down to twelve semifinalists. The next step was to prepare more detailed five-page summaries, along with ten-minute presentations, which would introduce the judges to the concept of their inventions. To help them prepare for this part of the competition, both students worked on their presentations with Raman Chadha and April Lane of the Coleman Center.

The semifinals were held on Friday, March 9, 2007. After they delivered their presentations, the judges' scores came in and Rania made the finals, but Justin didn't. Justin was disappointed, but realized that he had learned a lot from competing. "I learned that even a wonderful idea is not enough to win, you must have a detailed, realistic and easy-to-implement path to commercialization." Justin's invention is very complicated and intricate, and he felt that it was hard to describe to judges in the ten minutes. He also realized that as he moves on to competing and presenting this invention to others, he has to emphasize how he's going to take his invention to the market.

The finals were held the next day, giving Rania a chance to take the feedback she received in the semifinals and revise her presentation. The next morning, she was too nervous to rehearse anymore and was concerned about her three competitors' ideas being more "high tech": a medical device that helps labs more efficiently collect blood, a language learning software program that runs on mobile devices, and a new design for an airplane wing. In fact, her concern about being too "low-tech" almost kept her from entering the competition in the first place.

On Saturday, Rania delivered her revised presentation and took the questions from the judges. Afterwards, the winners were announced from fourth-place to first-place. Rania kept waiting for her name to be called. When finally, the second-place winner was announced, she realized that she had won the entire competition. For her efforts, Rania earned the first-place prize of \$5,000 in cash and an opportunity to compete in the Global I2P Competition later this year in Austin, Texas. For reaching the semi-finals, Justin earned \$250 in cash.

Even though Rania considers her invention low-tech, the judges were impressed with its simplicity and how well she described the business applications of the product. She knew her market, her financials, and could quantify the impact her invention would have on the industry.

Rania said that competing in I2P forced her to think about what really matters about her invention. She was always aware that she was solving a market pain, but she said that having to do the one-page and five-page summaries, and then the ten-minute presentation, made her think about what investors would want to know about her product. “It helps you decide what you research, how you research it, and how you present it.”

“It’s a joy to work with such talented students as Rania and Justin,” said Raman Chadha, executive director of the Coleman Entrepreneurship Center. “While balancing their responsibilities as students, they dedicate themselves to bringing ideas to life, and are perfect examples of the entrepreneurial spirit DePaul students possess. Needless to say, their representation at I2P and Rania’s first-place award were proud moments for all of us in the Coleman Center and the Entrepreneurship Program.”



It takes more than a great idea to get a new business off the ground. For recent alumna Rania El-Sorogy (COM '07) it took research, planning, ambition ... and a backache. "Since I was five years old, I wanted to change the world and give back to the community," she says. "I determined later that becoming an entrepreneur was my way of creating this change." By the time she entered DePaul University, the Barrington, Ill., native had developed ideas for some 40 new businesses based on providing practical solutions to everyday problems, such as reducing the bulk of backbreaking textbooks. To refine her ideas, El-Sorogy turned to the consulting services and educational programming offered by the Coleman Entrepreneurship Center. The center supports DePaul's nationally recognized entrepreneur degree programs. In 2007, Fortune Small Business named the undergraduate program one of the best 25 programs nationwide and the Kellstadt Graduate School of Business one of the nation's 26 top "B-schools with entrepreneurial flair." The programs also were ranked third and second best programs in the nation, respectively, by Entrepreneur magazine in 2006. One of El-Sorogy's ideas became Livre Libre, a flexible bookbinding system that allows users to remove and carry the chapters they need, while leaving the rest of the book at home. Her business plan for Livre Libre won the 2007 Regional Idea to Product collegiate entrepreneur competition sponsored by the University of Texas–Austin. Two months later, she won the 2007 DePaul New Venture challenge, a yearlong business plan competition for university students and alumni, with the plan for a dance Web site providing a wide range of dance-related content. After graduating in just three years, El-Sorogy is working to launch the dance site, PulzArt.com, and plans to spin it into a dance cable network. Additionally, a major publisher has expressed interest in Livre Libre.

Adam Robinson (MBA '04), cofounder and chief executive officer of the recruitment outsourcing firm Illuma, is driven by the same need to innovate. He began developing the firm's business plan in an MBA class taught by Harold P. Welsch, founder of DePaul's entrepreneurship program. "Thanks to the insight and feedback of Dr. Welsch and my classmates, I came out of the class with a polished and viable business plan for Illuma," says Robinson, a member of the Coleman Entrepreneurship Center's advisory board. Illuma is a new kind of recruiting firm, one that acts not as an outside service, but as the client's internal recruiting department. Launched three years ago, the firm employs a staff of 20 and produces annual revenues of \$6 million. Illuma's 30 Chicago-area clients include both start-up and established companies and several of the fastest-growing organizations in the United States.

With the support of alumni and friends, the Coleman Entrepreneurship Center continues to expand the programs and services it offers to entrepreneurs like Robinson and El-Sorogy. Supporters have pledged more than \$1.2 million to the center's ongoing \$1.5 million fund-raising drive. All money raised by June 30, 2008, will be matched dollar for dollar by the Coleman Foundation. "The Coleman Foundation has been incredibly generous and instrumental in the center's success," says Raman Chadha, the center's executive director. "Support from the foundation and others helps us strengthen our ability to equip students and entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills they need to launch and grow their business ventures."



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