

Investment in talent builds a bright future

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Semiconductors play a critical role at the heart of nearly all modern industries.

Often consisting of more than 2 billion transistors, they epitomise the raw efficiency pivotal to the development of modern economies.

However, at the heart of the industry that produces these tools lies something decidedly less mechanical - people, individuals who have ideas, who innovate, who are driven to excel.

So often when we talk about human capital, it's all about the numbers: how many people will have the right technology training; how large our talent force will be; what level of investment we are targeting. However, in an industry such as advanced technology, how we achieve our human capital goals lies not in the numbers, but through dedication to cultivating curiosity, ideas and personal drive. In other words, talent.

The Advanced Technology Investment Company (Atic) is investing in an Emirates-wide effort to build a robust workforce that competes and excels within the UAE's private sector and leads in global industry. At the most fundamental level, this requires creating an environment to instil our

nation's next generation with core values that form the fabric of success. These are values of entrepreneurship, innovation and hard work - values with rich ties to UAE national history.

Growing this skill set is not an easy task or a quick win. The objective requires long-term investment and active outreach to recruit the UAE's next generation of leaders. However, in reaching this objective, I believe we have already achieved concrete steps forward.

The Al Nokhba scholarship and internship programme is one such example of this progress and offers strong insight into the potential of the nation's youth. Sponsored by Atic and the Abu Dhabi Education Council, the scholarship provides the best and brightest students from Abu Dhabi with world-class learning opportunities in advanced technology.

Last year's class supported 41 students in their work to complete undergraduate studies and three in their Masters level studies across a range of science and engineering subjects. The applications for the scholarships this year are nearly due and I believe every year the Al Nokhba scholarship enables students to engage in the technology industry, we take a significant step towards a robust workforce and the emirate's successful economic diversification.

In addition to receiving full support for completion of their studies, the Al Nokhba scholars benefit from the opportunity to participate in a hands-on internship at Globalfoundries, the semiconductor manufacturing company owned by Atic. Last year was the third year Al Nokhba students travelled abroad for the internship and, to date, the programme has produced a total of 145 graduates poised to take a significant role in the industry.

Some of those graduates have already gone on to make waves in the world of advanced technology. Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting one such individual who was among our first batch of graduates. Late last year, he invented a new way of integrating microchips into prosthetic limbs. The innovation gives the disabled a degree of mobility that should greatly benefit the lives of countless people both regionally and abroad.

Another graduate who is on to a career at Globalfoundries has invented a microchip-powered device that airports may distribute to the elderly or those with known illnesses. The device monitors simple vital signs and allows paramedics to react instantly in the event of an emergency. While the invention may look straightforward, its benefit to humanity in terms of lives saved may be innumerable.

Put simply, the drive of the young talent in this Al Nokhba programme, their hard work and active engagement in the learning process, as well as the genius displayed by those who have gone on to innovate after graduation, is the exact embodiment of what we hope to achieve through our human capital programme.

Al Nokhba is just one facet of our broader initiative to drive human capital development across the Emirates. Our partnership with Abu Dhabi Polytechnic offers youth the opportunity to break

into the semiconductor industry from the ground level by providing a three-year higher diploma in semiconductor technology.

For those already in the workforce, our retooling programme offers the opportunity for those in technically skilled sectors to "retool" or retrain for a future as wafer-fabrication technologists. Similarly, our international work training programme is aimed at offering a career change to those who are currently employed in engineering-related roles. And all of these programmes are focused on offering comprehensive on-the-ground experience across the Globalfoundries international network of semiconductor manufacturing facilities.

I have full confidence the end result of Atic's long-term investment strategy coupled with the continued drive of the nation's youth will be of great numerical value. This work will create a larger talent base and grow the nation's GDP by establishing a strong foundation for the UAE's economic future. However, as the Al Nokhba graduates have demonstrated, we should all keep in mind that how we achieve our collective goals is not always by the numbers - it is through the talent of our next generation and our steadfast support of their growth.

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