For the Hult Global Case Challenge, Songyishu’s team competed against groups from other prestigious institutions, including Harvard, MIT Sloan, and UPenn’s Wharton. The NYU Abu Dhabi team placed first in the “Energy” track with a plan to provide solar-powered lighting to one million homes in Africa by 2013. Former president Bill Clinton presented the NYU team with an award of $1 million.

In her own words, Songyishu speaks about her experiences as an aspiring engineer.

“The education I have experienced at NYU Abu Dhabi is far different from that of traditional engineering schools. Rather than focusing on one specific area, I have been exposed to electrical, mechanical, and urban systems engineering. The diversity of courses has not only given me time to decide my interests but also a basic understanding of other engineering fields.

“Outside the classroom, my horizon is broadening by opportunities to experience travel and research. A visit to the Museum of Islamic Art in Qatar inspired my interest in historic preservation. My opportunity to conduct research with a professor from New York on rainwater management in Wuhan and Xiamen led me to present a paper at the World Renewable Energy Conference in Tunisia.

“As I think about the grand challenges for engineers today—to make solar energy economical, to restore and improve urban infrastructure, to secure cyberspace, to create better medicines—I realize that such problems demand collaboration between science and engineering, between continents and cultures. My education in NYUAD has shown me the value of these collaborations.”

Songyishu Yang, an engineering major at NYU Abu Dhabi, was part of the team of student scholars who won the New York City-sponsored Hult Global Case Challenge.