



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Startups win \$55,000 at the American University of Beirut President’s Innovation Challenge

Out of 100 applicants, 11 startups made it to the final round and competed at the American University of Beirut President’s Innovation Challenge pitching and awards ceremony held at the Beirut Digital District.

“This annual occasion allows us to celebrate innovation as an instrument of entrepreneurship, and as a sign that we have taken on our human responsibility to play a role in improving our lives, and the lives of others around us,” said Dr. Fadlo Khuri, president of the American University of Beirut.

The challenge, now in its third edition, gathers startups from the AUB community – including students, staff, faculty members, and alumni – with innovative ideas that can be developed into a scalable and financially sustainable business model, which in turn can have a considerable impact on people’s lives and well-being.

“We truly believe that young innovative ideas will have a significant impact on the world we live in,” said Dr. Yousif Asfour, American University of Beirut’s chief innovation and transformation officer. “The Talal and Madiha Zein AUB Innovation Park is here to help discover and nurture those ideas into fully impactful projects.”

The themes explored this year were in the areas of artificial intelligence, blockchain, machine learning, healthcare, environment, society, supply chain, as well as cultural and

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environmental fitness. Each finalist team had three minutes to pitch their idea, followed by a four-minute Q&A session with the judges.

The first prize, worth \$30,000, went to NADEERA, which helps instill circular economy practices through technology-enabled interventions. The second prize, worth \$15,000, went to Neural Vision, the first software that analyzes OCT eye scans to assess healing after surgery. The Chinyeh Hostler Award worth \$10,000, which was given for the first time to the winning team for social innovation, went to HOL XP, which empowers everyone to code using natural language. The People's Choice Award was also introduced this year for the first time, where the public got to vote for their favorite team. This award went to U Paint, a solution using easy coded points on canvas to paint.

All winners benefit from incubation as well as mentorship support at the Talal and Madiha Zein AUB Innovation Park.

Other finalists were TA&BIR, an Arabic mental health bot; Organic Farm, which offers farmers affordable and effective fertilizers through organic waste transformation; Host & Ghost, a platform that helps cloudify any restaurant to expand and scale anywhere in the world; Numu, an easy-to-use financial software; Intervu.ai, helping employers unearth the right talent; Phish E, which protects companies from phishing attacks; and No Deaffence, a software that translates speech into sign language

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 800 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 365-bed hospital.

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