



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Beirut, December 16, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bold Solutions Take Center Stage at AUB President's Innovation Challenge

The Final Pitching and Awards Ceremony of the American University of Beirut (AUB) President's Innovation Challenge — a flagship annual competition organized by the Talal and Madiha Zein AUB Innovation Park — was held on November 28, 2024. The event was a celebration of entrepreneurial spirit and forward-thinking solutions during uncertain times in Lebanon and the region.

Pioneering land-free agriculture, making neuro-diagnostic solutions more accessible, revolutionizing employee and shift management for the food and beverage industries, and building the go-to app for learning Arabic dialects, these were among the ten innovative solutions presented by the challenge's finalists at the event.

"History has shown us that when times are difficult, it's those who dare to push forward that do the greatest work," said Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB president, at the ceremony.

112 applications pooled in from nine countries around the world, all undergoing a rigorous selection process spanning six weeks, with two selection committees featuring 22 regional and international experts from a variety of fields. Ten Finalists innovating across HealthTech, social innovation, artificial intelligence (AI), FinTech, and sustainability were shortlisted to pitch at the Final Pitching and Awards Ceremony, which brought together over 170 esteemed guests—all united by the drive to create a better future.

After receiving expert advice and mentorship, shortlisted finalists presented a 3-minute pitch, followed by a 5-minute Q&A with five distinguished jury members, AUB President Fadlo Khuri, Beirut Digital District (BDD) CEO Mouhamad Rabah, Ardi Ardak SAL CEO Asmahan Zein, Toters CEO Tamim Khalfa, and Nicolas Rouhana, IM Fndng chairman and CEO.

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“There are no right or wrong decisions. Whatever decision you take, try to do your best to succeed,” said BDD CEO Mouhamad Rabah when addressing the finalists during the Final Pitching and Awards Ceremony.

This year, three winners received a total prize pool of \$55K. SchedEx, an AI-powered SaaS (software as a service) solution revolutionizing employee and shift management for the hospitality and food and beverage industries, landed the Advanced Stage Award of \$30K. Aralects, which is building the go-to app for learning Arabic dialects, won the Early-Stage Award of \$15K and was voted by the audience as the winner of the People’s Choice Award. Prevo Biotech, who is pioneering land-free agriculture through producing nutritious food crops by fermentation, received the Chinyeh Hostler Award for Social Innovation of \$10K, made possible by the generous donation of Chinyeh Hostler.

Dr. Yousif Asfour, iPark executive director and chief innovation and transformation officer at AUB, stated in his opening speech, “To stand here today and witness such outstanding innovations reaching this stage, especially after the last 60 days, and despite the many challenges, is nothing short of inspiring.”

ENDS

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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 750 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 students. AUB currently offers more than 140 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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