



**AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
OF BEIRUT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Women in Data Science Conference at AUB Unites International and National Leaders for a Sustainable Future**

The 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the Women in Data Science at the American University of Beirut (WiDS@AUB) conference—the largest data science hub in the region—convened a remarkable gathering of international, regional, and national speakers from diverse backgrounds offering technical talks, panels, and workshops; under the overarching theme of “Sustainable Rebuilding in Times of Crisis.” The event was organized by the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business (OSB) at the American University of Beirut (AUB).

This year’s edition centered its program around three integrated tracks, Sustainable Infrastructure and Rebuilding, Healthcare Resilience and Innovation, and Social Sustainability—each showcasing how data science can drive sustainable rebuilding and innovation. Technical talks focused on using data to strengthen infrastructure planning, enhance healthcare delivery and innovation during crises, and support evidence-based social sustainability and development.

The conference brought together over 1,400 registrants and more than 1,150 attendees from across 30 countries, including Lebanon, the UAE, the United States, Qatar, Jordan, Syria, Canada, France, Egypt. The event featured participation from over 350 organizations and hosted over 20 distinguished speakers from academia, industry, and international institutions. Each of the conference’s workshops attracted more than 300 participants, reflecting the growing regional and global engagement with the WiDS@AUB and its mission to advance women’s representation and leadership in data science.

In his opening address, Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB president, reflected on the evolving role of data science in shaping more resilient and equitable societies. “Data science has moved far beyond prediction,” Khuri said. “It now helps societies adapt and progress, prompting us to rethink how we use technology and how equitably we share its benefits. At AUB, we see this as a moral responsibility. Technology must serve people, not the other way around.”

Professor Yusuf Sidani, OSB dean, emphasized the empowering role of data literacy in advancing women’s contributions across all spheres of society, noting that, “with data comes the ability to understand and with understanding comes freedom. It is our role as an institution of higher learning to open the doors for women to use data in any way they see fit for positive impact in the family, in the community, and in society at large.”

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The conference opened with welcome remarks from Professor Lama Moussawi, associate dean for research and chair of the WiDS@AUB conference. Moussawi reflected on the relevance of this year's theme to the realities Lebanon continues to face. Professor of Medicine Ghada El Hajj Fuleihan, founding director of the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Center for Metabolic Bone Disorders and the Scholars in Health Research Program (SHARP) at AUB, highlighted the vital role of academia in bridging the public and private sectors. Associate Professor of Machine Learning Mariette Awad, director of the Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and Computing (AI-DSC) Hub at AUB, spoke about how "data science, when done with purpose, can rebuild trust and hope," and launched the WiDS@AUB hackathon, where more than 100 students collaborated to develop innovative data-driven tools addressing Lebanon's most pressing sustainability challenges.

The event featured a high-level panel discussion, "Lebanon's Digital Leap: AI in Governance and Public Services," bringing together four ministers, Minister of Social Affairs Haneen Al-Sayed; Dr. Rakan Nasereddine, minister of public health; Dr. Kamal Shehadi, minister of state for technology and artificial intelligence; and Dr. Mohamad Haidar, minister of labor. The panel was moderated by Dr. Carole Al Sharabati, director of research at Siren Associates, and discussed how data science can drive public sector reform and advance Lebanon's 2030 vision.

The 9<sup>th</sup> edition also held a student hackathon powered by The Talal and Madiha Zein AUB Innovation Park, where multidisciplinary teams collaborated to develop data-driven solutions aligned with the theme of sustainable rebuilding. The hackathon awarded two winning teams, with the first-place prize of \$1,500 and a second-place prize of \$500, recognizing the most innovative and impactful student solutions.

A parallel panel, "Women, Work, and Sustainable Futures," organized by David Matta, director of the OSB Career Management Services Office, brought together leaders and practitioners to explore how data-driven insights, evolving workplace dynamics, and emerging technologies are reshaping career pathways for women and supporting more sustainable and inclusive professional environments.

In addition, the AUB Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and Computing Hub led a series of hands-on workshops designed to build AI literacy and practical skills among participants. These included "Alcademy for NextGen," an introductory session aimed at younger learners; "Introduction to ChatGPT: Maneuvering GenAI Tools," offering practical guidance on using generative AI effectively; and "GenAI Tools: Advanced Clinic," a deep-dive workshop for more advanced users.

## **About WiDS@AUB**

WiDS@AUB is an independent regional event organized by the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business at the American University of Beirut, that feature outstanding Arab and international women making significant contributions to the field. WiDS@AUB is the largest WiDS event globally, and it aims to inspire and educate data scientists worldwide, regardless of gender, and to support women in the field, promoting a higher representation of women in data science in the MENA region. It provides a platform for discussing the latest data science research, business development, and applications; encourages mentorship and interdisciplinary collaboration; and connects regional researchers and practitioners with pioneering global data science networks.

For more information, visit the event's [website](#).

## **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 790 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 9000 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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