



**AMERICAN
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OF BEIRUT**

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AUB President's Innovation Challenge: Lebanon's Innovators Rise with Purpose

Breakthroughs in digital identity, non-invasive health monitoring, experiential education, clean energy, and AI-powered advertising took center stage at the American University of Beirut (AUB) President's Innovation Challenge 2025 (PIC 2025), held at Beirut Digital District (BDD) and organized by the Talal and Madiha Zein AUB Innovation Park (iPark).

This year's challenge highlighted continued entrepreneurial activity and forward-looking initiatives across Lebanon. It gathered founders, investors, academics, and policymakers under one roof, representing a range of stakeholders engaged in Lebanon's innovation ecosystem.

In his opening speech, Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB president, said, "As a university grounded in serving society, empowering minds, and advancing knowledge for the public good, we take moments like today very seriously. Innovation is not an accessory to AUB's work; it is a natural extension of our mission."

"This represents the best of Lebanon," affirmed Dr. Kamal Shehadi, minister of state for technology and artificial intelligence. "So much talent, universities, entrepreneurs, and investors coming together to shape the country's future."

For Mouhamad Rabah, CEO of BDD and general manager of ZEAL Communities, the event was both a showcase and a reminder. "Events like the President's Innovation Challenge reinforce confidence in Lebanon's ability to create, solve problems, and move forward despite ongoing challenges."

Dr. Yousif Asfour, chief innovation and transformation officer at AUB, said, "For the first time, we are witnessing a collective rise—government, universities, founders, mentors, angels, partners—all moving in sync. At iPark, we are shaping market access, investor readiness, and global scale-up pathways."

A Day Powered by Ideas and Exchange

The program opened with speed networking, fireside conversations, and keynote dialogues exploring where innovation is headed, and how technology, purpose, and adaptability are reshaping what comes next.

The final ceremony brought together a jury representing global leadership in academia, industry, and venture investment including Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB president; Dr. Kamal Shehadi,

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minister of state for technology and artificial intelligence; Mouhamad Rabah, BDD CEO; John Chi, Synova Life Sciences founder and CEO; and Elissar Farah Antonios, Soul Ventures founder and CEO.

Each startup delivered a concise 3-minute pitch followed by rigorous Q&A—highlighting solutions rooted in real needs and a vision for scalable impact.

This year's participating startups spanned AI, health, education, sustainability, and infrastructure, reflecting the range of sectors represented within the country's innovation landscape. Among them: Beaver Edu, ModularCx, Impersonas, Bilo, IGT Optima, Floating Hydrogen Ports, Axi-Kit, ChromaTwin, Dermatine, and Oramala. These founders are building products and technologies that respond to real-world challenges while imagining what Lebanon, and the region, can become.

PIC 2025 recognized outstanding achievements across categories. Impersonas was the Advanced Stage winner, Dermatine was the Early Stage winner, Beaver Edu received the Social Innovation Award, and nuwatt.co won the People's Choice Award.

Yet the event highlighted the progress of all participating teams, reflecting sustained work in building and refining solutions within a demanding innovation landscape.

The event concluded with exhibitions and community networking, reinforcing dialogue around collaboration and ecosystem development in Lebanon, as well as trust in its local talent.

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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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