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TransformED 2025 Summit at AUB Explores New Pathways for Higher Education

The Abdulla Al Ghurair Hub for Digital Teaching and Learning at the American University of Beirut (AUB) hosted the TransformED 2025 Summit—a two-day regional gathering that brought together over 500 participants, including university leadership, policymakers, technology experts, educators, and innovators, to reimagine higher education in the digital age under the theme “Empowering Learner Experience.”

Held on AUB’s Beirut campus, TransformED 2025 offered a dynamic program of keynote addresses, panel discussions, interactive workshops, and an industry fair showcasing EdTech innovations. The summit addressed critical questions facing higher education in the MENA region: expanding access and affordability, elevating educational standards, and aligning academic programs with the evolving needs of the labor market.

Voices that Shaped the Dialogue

In his opening keynote, Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB president, underscored the urgency of the summit’s mission: “Higher education is at a crossroads. We must reimagine access, affordability, and relevance—while ensuring that technology never replaces the human connection at the heart of learning.” Khuri’s remarks set the stage for two days of in-depth conversations on how institutions can adapt to shifting realities while preserving the values of human-centered education.

Danah Dajani, senior vice president of programs and partnerships at the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation, emphasized the social mission underpinning the summit: “How do we build education systems that are relevant, strong, and inclusive, for every learner and every context? This question inspired most of our work at the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation. Over the past decade, we have worked with underserved youth, refugees, and institutions across the Arab world.”

Cindy Bonfini-Hotlosz, CEO of Centreity, highlighted the importance of learner-centered design and holistic quality frameworks in education. She spoke about the need to build learning

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experiences that are global, contextual, and deeply human—experiences that can cross borders, adapt to change, and prepare learners for an unpredictable future. She noted, “It’s not about the product anymore, it’s about the process. So as faculty, we need to think: what is the process of learning?”

Hoda Sleilaty Younan, chief operating officer and chief marketing officer for Microsoft Middle East and Africa, focused on the impact of generative AI: “The speed that we have moved through in this particular technology shows that we really have to change, to be agile, and look forward. We are now enabling the world’s next industrial revolution.”

A Regional and Global Exchange

Panel discussions were organized around three thematic strands addressing open access to education in the MENA region, enhancing educational standards, and professions and the future of work.

The panel “Digital Education in Times of Crisis” focused on ensuring continuity of learning during conflict, displacement, and economic hardship. Moderated by Professor Lina Choueiri, deputy provost at AUB, the session featured panelists Danah Dajani, senior vice president of programs and partnerships at Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation; Hyam Ishac, president of the Center for Educational Research and Development; Rabih Shibli, executive director of the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service at AUB; and Professor Alan Shihadeh, dean of the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture at AUB.

A panel on enhancing educational standards examined curriculum redesign, microlearning, open educational resources, and innovative assessment methods. The session was moderated by Professor Zaher Dawy, provost of the American University of Beirut, and featured Professor Ismael Al Hinti, president of the Hussein Technical University in Jordan; Dr. Bassam Badran, president of the Lebanese University; and Dr. Fadlo Khuri, president of the American University of Beirut.

The session “Bridging Education and Employment” focused on lifelong learning, employer partnerships, and equipping graduates with both technical and transferable skills. It was moderated by Professor Imad H. Elhadj, associate dean for academic transformation at the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture at AUB, and brought together Clara El Sayegh, project engineer and consultant at Synergy Consulting Engineers; Ghia Osseiran, employability consultant with the International Finance Corporation; Frankie Randle, higher education specialist at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Rana Ghandour Salhab, managing partner at People & Purpose, Deloitte Middle East executive, and Deloitte North South Europe People & Purpose executive; and Professor Issam Srouf, director of the Abdulla Al Ghurair Hub for Digital Teaching and Learning at AUB.

Alongside plenary sessions, parallel workshops and presentations allowed participants to dive deeper into specific topics such as designing engaging online courses, harnessing data for student success, supporting learners in crisis contexts, and advancing regional collaboration in digital education.

A highlight of the summit was the industry fair, where EdTech exhibitors presented emerging tools and platforms designed to make learning more adaptive, accessible, and engaging.

Participants had the opportunity to experience demonstrations and connect with solution providers shaping the future of educational technology in the region.

Outcomes and Significance

TransformED 2025 closed with a call for stronger collaboration across universities, industry, governments, and nonprofits to sustain the momentum of innovation. Speakers and participants alike underscored the importance of lifelong learning, agility in curriculum design, and equitable access to digital education opportunities.

The summit also reaffirmed AUB's role as a regional leader in shaping transformative education. By convening stakeholders from across the Arab world and beyond, AUB highlighted the importance of Beirut as a hub for critical dialogue and innovation in higher education.

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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