

For Immediate Release



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AUB and Resource Group launch the second **'Resource Group Entrepreneurship Awards'**

Once again, this year, the private and education sectors join forces to empower the youth, develop human capital, and contribute to economic and social growth

For the second year, the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and Resource Group, a regional management group, announce the Resource Group Entrepreneurship Awards. For this edition, the start-ups scope will be extended beyond cybersecurity and information privacy to include artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), education technology (ed tech), identity management, blockchain, and fintech.

Two start-up proposals submitted by MSFEA/AUB students are awarded the Resource Group Entrepreneurship Awards each year. A group of academics and professionals choose the winners. Each award comprises both direct monetary assistance for the student start-up and a contribution to the supervising academic member's research and development (R&D) fund(s).

The Resource Group Entrepreneurship Awards are a testament to the nation's resilience. They also emphasize the importance of the business sector in assisting educational institutions in the development of human potential as well as the promotion of innovation and creativity.

This partnership also exemplifies Resource Group's dedication to social responsibility, youth empowerment, and entrepreneurship, and its commitment to provide students with the chance to develop and implement their ideas in their motherland. The two awards inspire hope and strengthen resilience in young people who are eager to move forward and succeed, but who need educational and material support along their journey to make their dreams come true.

Hisham Itani, chairman and CEO at Resource Group, explained the importance of supporting the youth in a sustainable manner considering the difficult times that the country is going through. "More than ever, students are looking for hope and possibilities to believe that their ideas can and will be a reality. Once again this year, through our partnership with AUB and our support to MSFEA's Entrepreneurship Initiative, we make sure that students are well prepared for the entrepreneurial journey and have the right resources to execute their innovations." He continued, "With its wider scope, the Resource Group Entrepreneurship Awards reflect our commitment to empowering and promoting the creative human capital that is at the foundation of a thriving knowledge economy."

Dr. Imad Elhadj, professor of electrical and computer engineering at MSFEA, stated that the faculty is striving hard to support the local and regional ecosystem of innovation to drive economic and social development. "The announcement today demonstrates, that despite the many challenges we are facing, MSFEA will remain a beacon of hope. The faculty is a regional hub and the Entrepreneurship Initiative capitalizes on MSFEA's strengths, leveraging the work that faculty and students are doing, to enable our constituents to establish their own start-ups. This continued partnership with Resource Group, for a second year, emphasizes our shared commitment to Lebanon and our strong belief in the power of change when we work together."

The RFSafe team (students Omar Al Jaroudi, Bashar Baajour, Abdallah Dandashli, and Mostafa Kamal Itani; co-supervisors Dr. Rouwaida Kanj and Dr. Ali Chehab) won the 2021 Resource Group Entrepreneurship Award in information privacy for its project to strengthen the security of the EMV protocol, which is currently used for smart-card payment transactions. The team's solution fully protects against a weakness known as a "relay attack."

The project to develop a platform that could be used to automatically perform penetration testing on cloud applications by the BlackPen team (students Antoine El Choueiri, Christophe Saab, and Edmond Samaha; supervisor Dr. Ali Chehab) won the 2021 Resource Group Entrepreneurship Award in cybersecurity. BlackPen's technology makes it feasible to detect and resolve vulnerabilities and security risks in cloud apps without considerable input from a knowledgeable user. "This was undoubtedly a fruitful experience," El Choueiri stated. "We all gained helpful insight into entrepreneurship. What was most valuable though was the guidance of our advisor, Dr. Ali Chehab, and the coordinator, Dr. Mona Itani, as well as the advice we received from the judges."

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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 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,500 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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