



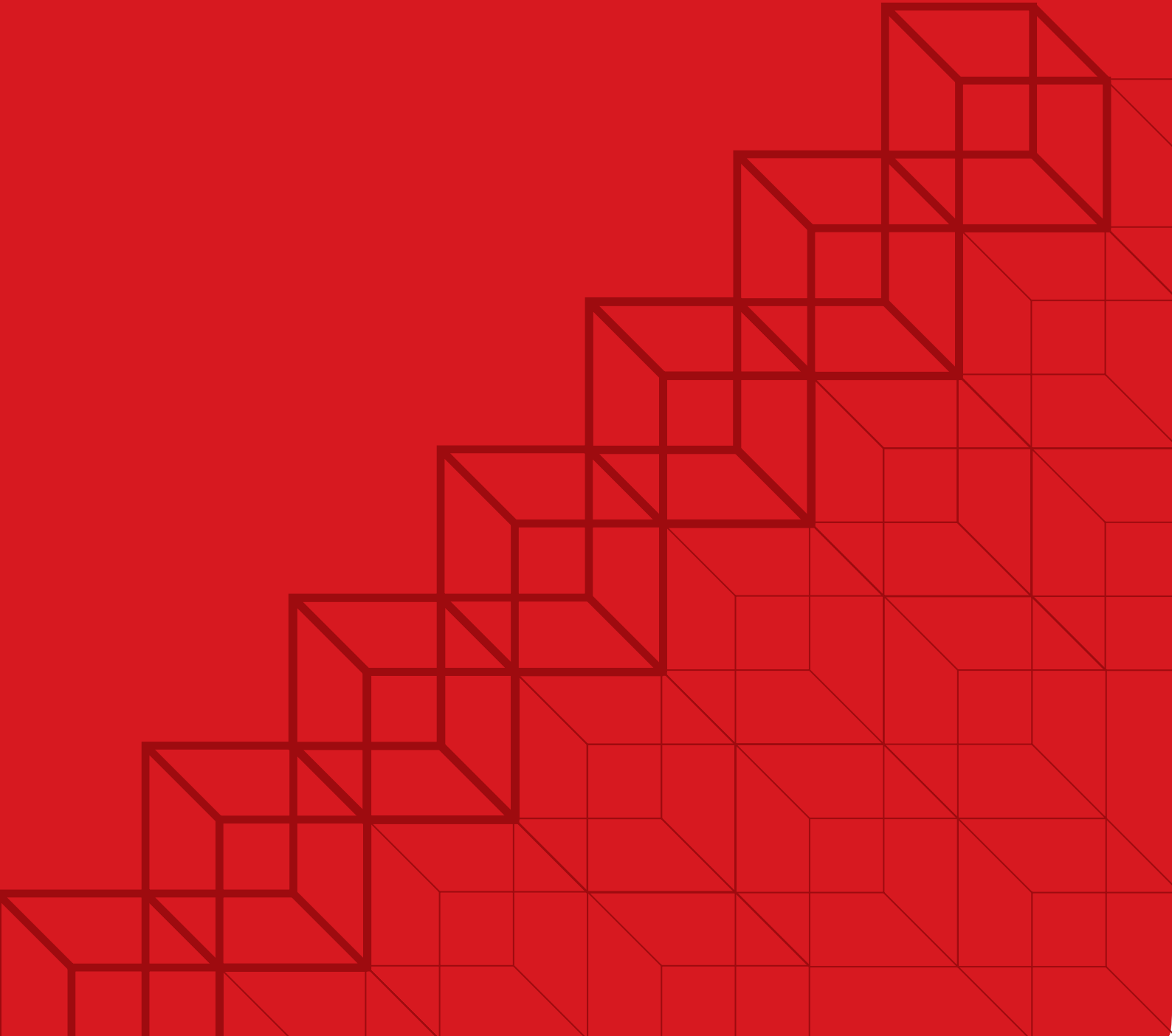
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AUM

American University Of The Middle East

A GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY: TRANSFORMATION, INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY



EDUCATING FOR IMPACT: UNIVERSITIES, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE ROAD TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS HAVE A CRITICAL ROLE TO PLAY IN **EQUIPPING GRADUATES WITH THE ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET** TO ADDRESS GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES AND CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a call to action for the global community. They envision a world in which there is no poverty, the planet is protected for current and future generations, and all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Universities play a crucial role in advancing these goals by fostering an ecosystem of learning, research and entrepreneurship. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, innovation and knowledge sharing, these institutions equip future leaders with the skills and solutions to tackle global challenges.

"Universities have a powerful voice in advocating for sustainability and can succeed in their role by fostering a more inclusive, innovative and effective approach to addressing sustainability challenges through well-prepared entrepreneurs and workforces," says Georges Yahchouchi, president of the American University of the Middle East (AUM).

The United Nations adopted the 17 SDGs in 2015, and they include goals upon which universities have a direct impact, such as quality education (SDG 4), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9) and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17).

The aim was to attain the 17 SDGs by 2030, but progress has been slow and much is still to be done. Since 2019, the Covid-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions and the rise in extreme weather events have

thwarted national efforts to realise the 17 interconnected goals. However, universities are melting pots of ideas and innovation, making them uniquely placed to drive change. AUM, for example, understands the value of entrepreneurship and innovation in addressing the SDGs and contributing to economic and social development.

By 2030, SDG 4 aims to ensure that all people have equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education. AUM's mission is to provide an interactive learning environment that facilitates the development of leaders who are committed to their culture, global ethical values and professionalism.

"At AUM, we affirm our role and responsibility in shaping a generation of young people who will drive local and global change, with sustainability as a core foundation of our ethos and philosophy, providing a platform for future leaders to succeed," Yahchouchi says.

AUM has adopted a learner-centred approach to education, providing students with both theoretical and applied knowledge. Students are the focus of the learning approach, and they benefit from a holistic learning experience. AUM's curriculum also reflects its educational philosophy. To nurture resilient students who can respond to global challenges, AUM focuses on creativity, innovation and critical thinking, and emphasises continuous development long after graduation.



UNIVERSITIES HAVE A POWERFUL VOICE IN ADVOCATING FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND CAN SUCCEED IN THEIR ROLE BY FOSTERING A MORE INCLUSIVE, INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO ADDRESSING SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES,"

GEORGES YAHCHOUCHI,
PRESIDENT OF AUM



AUM incorporates this philosophy into professional development for its staff, who model lifelong learning for their students. This culture of continuous development ensures that AUM staff benefit from lifelong learning and empowering opportunities. This is in keeping with SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).

Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) are fundamental to a prosperous and peaceful society, and universities are crucial to achieving this goal. SDG 8 aims to achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation. AUM works to ensure that its graduates are equipped to deal with a rapidly changing workplace and world. To do this, the university makes certain that its students are not only armed with the necessary skills but also that they keep up to date with the latest technological capabilities.

"New technologies – AI in particular – are game changers set to revolutionise job sectors," Yahchouchi says. "At AUM, we capitalise on the opportunities provided by this technological advancement through a collaborative and comprehensive strategy, employing a bottom-up approach where new ideas, innovations and integration thrive among faculty, staff and students, thus enabling them to upskill their proficiency in AI."

AUM has set up innovation centres dedicated to cutting-edge technologies, such as robotics, nanotechnology and AI. The centres also host student clubs, which have a significant impact on students' learning journeys. The clubs create a space for students to strengthen their digital literacy, discover new interests, showcase their abilities and connect with like-minded peers.

SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) includes enhancing scientific research and upgrading the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries. By exposing its students to high-technology spaces and laboratories, AUM ensures that its graduates have the skills to undertake relevant scientific research, secure decent work and generate the economic growth to realise many of the other SDGs and create a prosperous society.

Since AUM was founded in 2005, the institution has put innovation and entrepreneurship at the heart of its mission. Over the years, it has cemented these ideas across its business and engineering programmes. "The new economy needs entrepreneurially spirited individuals who can innovate and develop sustainable solutions that drive economic and social development. To prepare the youth for this landscape, AUM offers entrepreneur-orientated education that equips individuals

with the skills and mindsets to create jobs," Yahchouchi says.

Entrepreneurship is key to achieving the SDGs. It promotes economic growth and job creation, reinforcing SDG 8's focus on decent work and economic growth. Graduates with an entrepreneurial mindset can develop innovative solutions to societal and environmental challenges. Entrepreneurship also highlights the importance of ecosystems and partnerships. Through its focus on entrepreneurship, AUM is strengthening partnerships with local and regional universities, businesses and governments, as well as those in other countries.

SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals) underscores the need for innovative collaborative efforts in the mission to achieve the SDGs. AUM's vision is to be a higher education institution recognised for its knowledge creation and dissemination in the Middle East and beyond.

"In today's globalised world, which is shaped by digital revolution and a commitment to sustainable development, we must leverage our shared potential and capacity by building partnerships. AUM is expanding horizons with strategic partnerships in research, cutting-edge AI, entrepreneurship education and innovation," Yahchouchi says.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION BUILDS TOMORROW'S LEADERS

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION EQUIPS LEARNERS WITH CRITICAL SKILLS, FOSTERING INNOVATION, RESILIENCE AND PROBLEM-SOLVING FOR A DYNAMIC WORLD

Entrepreneurship ignites innovation, economic growth and job creation. Each of these is fundamental to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and creating a peaceful and prosperous world. The American University of the Middle East (AUM) has long recognised the importance of entrepreneurship, embedding entrepreneurship education and innovation across its business and engineering programmes.

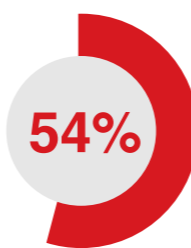
"Businesses serve as the most effective catalysts for change," says Georges Yahchouchi, president of AUM. "They empower economic progress, generate wealth and foster job creation while playing a key role in improving societal and living standards and promoting environmental standards"

Entrepreneurship education is a major marker for individual and business success. Those with entrepreneurship training are more likely to start businesses. A 2021 meta-analysis of 44 studies found that people who had entrepreneurial training were more likely to start a business than those who did not. This can have a direct impact on the local and national economy. Start-ups create new opportunities, both within the company and in the communities

and networks further along the value chain. For example, companies spun out of the University of Oxford, which had the highest number of spin-offs out of all UK universities between 2008 and 2018, had a total value of £6.4 billion, of which £2.9 billion was through investment, according to a 2021 GovGrant report. These businesses stimulate economic activity and job creation, with the benefits spreading as they grow.

It is important to expose young people to an entrepreneurial mindset as soon as possible. "The best way to prepare for the future is to actively learn to build it. As educators, our ultimate reward in instilling an entrepreneurial mindset is witnessing young learners striving to make a positive impact in their community," Yahchouchi says.

Studies from around the world have shown that students who are exposed to entrepreneurship education in primary and secondary school develop higher ambitions for their educational prospects – and life in general – when compared with a control group. Their confidence was also higher after their entrepreneurship education, they had better employability prospects and were less likely to be unemployed than their peers who had not had similar training.



of entrepreneurs had **no connection to a family business and started their own companies** based on interests or new opportunities

A 2023 HSBC report into entrepreneurial wealth highlighted the ambition and independence of new business owners. "Our research shows that over half of entrepreneurs (54 per cent) don't have a connection to a family business and are instead creating their own paths by starting companies around their interests or to capitalise on new opportunities," the authors write.

According to an article published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, students who engaged in entrepreneurship programmes also had improved opportunity recognition, idea development and problem-solving skills. This innovative thinking is integral to entrepreneurship – whether it is through identifying business opportunities and gaps in the market or developing new technologies to address a societal need. "Entrepreneurship is driven by creativity: generating jobs that are yet to be created, developing products that are yet to be envisioned, leveraging technologies that are yet to be invented and tackling problems that haven't been imagined," Yahchouchi says.

The concepts of innovation and entrepreneurship are closely intertwined, which is something that AUM recognises and promotes in its teaching and research. Like entrepreneurship, innovation requires creativity, problem-solving skills, an element of risk-taking and the ability to capitalise on opportunities. Innovation involves the practical implementation of new ideas, methods, products and services, and can also drive progress as entrepreneurs try to create new products or services to address a challenge or gap in the market. Innovation can spur entrepreneurship as technological leaps and scientific discoveries give companies an advantage over their competitors.

This mutually reinforcing relationship can drive economic growth and job creation, but it also creates a foundation for addressing societal challenges. Innovation is a critical driver of sustainable development, according to a 2024 article in the *Journal of Innovation and Knowledge*. "Innovations can substantially impact the costs associated with making progress, offering opportunities to develop solutions, approaches and environmental actions that can contribute to sustainable development," the article says.

New technologies, such as AI and nanotechnology, are hotbeds of innovation, with entrepreneurs identifying solutions to some of humanity's greatest challenges. These range from smart cities powered by AI to greener and more cost-effective manufacturing methods. At AUM's innovation centres, students are exposed to a wide variety of cutting-edge technologies to foster innovation and new ideas. "Great ideas are only the beginning," Yahchouchi says. "Support for execution, motivation, adaptability and the use of technological advancements are the factors that turn ideas into success. This is where AUM's innovation centres come into play. By promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and personal skills, empowered by digital literacy, these centres are places where students turn ideas into award-winning projects. Such projects include an AI-based device in healthcare, a prototype of a car powered by solar or chemical energy, an innovative new social media platform, and the list goes on."

AUM actively works to foster this mindset among its students, staff and partners. In 2023, the university organised the Global Symposium for Entrepreneurship Educators – the first edition in the MENA region – in collaboration with Babson

College, a private business school in Massachusetts, US. The symposium "fosters economic development and social value at the institutional, regional or national levels by preparing educators to teach with an entrepreneurial mindset", according to Babson College. Nearly 50 participants attended the three-day symposium, which focused on entrepreneurial thought and action. It brought together stakeholders from the banking and oil and gas sectors, academics from regional colleges in the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Bahrain and Qatar, and AUM staff.

In 2024, AUM staff joined educators from 23 countries around the world for the Babson Collaborative Global Summit to share knowledge and advance thought leadership in entrepreneurial education. "It was great to know the best practices in entrepreneurship education, student engagement and community impact from peers across the globe, which enriched the experience and furthered the horizons of imagination and possibility in our local entrepreneurship ecosystems," says Audil Rashid Khaki, associate professor and dean of the College of Business Administration at AUM.

Entrepreneurship education is a catalyst for progress, shaping individuals who can adapt, innovate and lead in an ever-changing world. By embedding entrepreneurial thinking in education, institutions like AUM are not only preparing students for business success but also empowering them to tackle global challenges. As entrepreneurship continues to drive economic and social impact, investing in education that fosters creativity, problem-solving and resilience will be key to building a future of sustainable growth and opportunity.

SDGS UNLOCK NEW PATHS FOR ENTREPRENEURS

THE SDGS DRIVE INNOVATION BY INSPIRING ENTREPRENEURS TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS, UNLOCKING NEW MARKETS AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are humanity's plan to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Achieving the SDGs requires new ways of thinking and operating, making them a catalyst for entrepreneurialism. At its heart, entrepreneurship is about creative thinking, looking for gaps in the market and solving problems. The SDGs show the urgent need for these skills, while at the same time contributing to entrepreneurialism.

SDG 4 aims to broaden access to quality education, eliminating gender disparities and ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training. "Quality education is a crucial factor in equipping young people with innovation and entrepreneurship skills to be productive and navigate life's uncertainties effectively," says Georges Yahchouchi, president of the American University of the Middle East. According to the World Bank, education boosts employment prospects, health outcomes and poverty reduction. Similarly, the OECD's Education at a Glance 2024 report found that full-time workers with upper secondary degrees earn about 18 per cent more than those without such qualifications, on average, across OECD countries. Tertiary education was an even greater amplifier, with workers earning twice as much as those who had completed lower secondary school.

Several studies have shown that entrepreneurial education improves career and outcomes in later life.

Ensuring increased and equal access to entrepreneurial education would have a knock-on effect throughout communities around the world, while concurrently strengthening economic growth and job creation. Economic development, in turn, increases education opportunities.

The interplay between education and entrepreneurship is self-reinforcing: economic growth spurs government and corporate revenue, which promotes investment in education infrastructure and resources. Education reduces poverty, enabling more families to afford education for their children. Moreover, a growing economy can also coax the private sector to invest in education and expand educational opportunities to more individuals – and the cycle continues

Similarly, SDG 8, which targets decent work and economic growth, bolsters entrepreneurship while simultaneously benefiting from it. This goal encourages businesses to invest in innovation, giving rise to new ideas, products and services. These innovations create more opportunities for entrepreneurship as entrepreneurs apply them to different markets and adapt to specific niches.

SDG 8 also emphasises the need for sustainable economic growth and business practices. This often requires finding new ways of doing business or implementing new systems, which breeds innovation and entrepreneurship. By creating businesses

that are both profitable and environmentally responsible, entrepreneurs reinforce other SDGs, such as those that aim to protect people's welfare and the environment.

SDG 8 explicitly underscores the need for more entrepreneurship education and ties in with SDG 4 (quality education). Entrepreneurship education can give people the skills to take advantage of the opportunities created by economic growth and the need for decent work. "Advancing the SDGs requires creating new socioeconomic and environmental opportunities and addressing sustainability challenges. Otherwise, there would be no

call to action for the global community," Yahchouchi says. "This is a defining moment in entrepreneurship education as human creativity cannot be replaced, even by the most advanced technologies."

Investment in industry, innovation and infrastructure, as laid out in SDG 9, is crucial to entrepreneurship. These three elements significantly boost entrepreneurialism because they increase the capability for new idea development, market creation and ecosystem growth. Innovation and entrepreneurship reinforce each other, with innovative products and services giving entrepreneurs an edge over their competitors and the ability to target new or niche markets. Simultaneously, entrepreneurship relies on creative thinking and problem-solving, which are the hallmarks of innovation.

Entrepreneurship is also heavily influenced by the availability of functional infrastructure. Accessible infrastructure lays a foundation upon which businesses and entrepreneurs can enhance their productivity and extend their reach. It is easier to access markets and introduce new products with the support of robust financial, transportation and telecommunications infrastructure. For example, a 2022 study by Copenhagen Business School showed that investment in broadband infrastructure supported the establishment of new firms in high-technology industries and services. By investing in infrastructure, countries and industries are growing the capabilities of entrepreneurs trying to introduce new products and services.

Investments in industry also reinforce entrepreneurship. Importantly, they support the ecosystems in which entrepreneurs and start-ups flourish. Entrepreneurs are part of a network of suppliers, vendors and partners, and investment in this network flows to others in the ecosystem. Growing industries also have a greater need for new services and products, which nurture opportunities for entrepreneurs.

Partnerships within this ecosystem encourage the upskilling of individuals, and that reinforces other SDGs, such as quality education (SDG 4) and the need for decent work and economic growth

(SDG 8). They also facilitate the sharing of knowledge between different members of the ecosystem, supporting domestic technology development.

"We live in an era of radical change, where success depends on investment in industry, innovation and infrastructure. This journey demands a clear vision, adaptability and the courage to face the unknown. These traits define successful entrepreneurs and start-ups in search of new niches to exploit," Yahchouchi says.

SDG 17 emphasises that the interconnected SDGs can only be achieved through partnerships. These partnerships range from intergovernmental cooperation and technology transfer between nations to local interactions among communities, businesses and higher education institutions. The SDGs' globalised perspective bolsters entrepreneurship, encouraging businesses that operate in various communities, regions and countries to think about their wide-reaching impact. SDG 17 recognises that solutions that solve problems and address SDGs in one place can also be used elsewhere – or adapted to fulfil market niches in other jurisdictions.

Partnerships – between academic institutions, innovation ecosystems and the private sector – are a lynchpin in the entrepreneurial system. "Just imagine how far the journey could go when students from different backgrounds, educators and business leaders are engaged together in innovation and creativity," Yahchouchi says. "Collaborations unlock our ability to advance a bold agenda that promotes open-minded dialogue and exchange of best practice on the diverse critical issues related to community needs and sustainability challenges." The entrepreneurial ecosystem is built on partnerships, which the SDGs actively seek to promote.

The United Nations' goals to create a prosperous and peaceful world prepare the ground for entrepreneurship and the innovation, growth and solutions that it brings. At the same time, the goals benefit from that same entrepreneurship. This dynamic cycle underscores the vital role of entrepreneurship education in shaping a sustainable and opportunity-rich future.



A 2022 study by Copenhagen Business School found that **investment in broadband infrastructure supported the establishment of new firms in high-tech industries and services**



THE IMPACT RANKINGS HIGHLIGHT UNIVERSITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ASSESSING UNIVERSITIES’ CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, THE’S IMPACT RANKINGS HIGHLIGHT INSTITUTIONS DRIVING INNOVATION AND BUSINESS SOLUTIONS ALIGNED WITH THE SDGS

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action for all nations, institutions, and individual communities to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Higher education institutions have an essential role to play in realising these ambitious targets.

Universities are hubs of innovation, knowledge and training. Times Higher Education’s (THE) Impact Rankings assess universities according to their contributions to the SDGs. Rankings are increasingly important in the higher education sector as they illuminate concrete achievements by institutions, track progress and show where improvements can be made. The THE Impact Rankings, which incorporate the SDGs, incentivise higher education institutions to prioritise sustainability and social impact in their operations and decision-making and promote transparency and accountability within higher education.

Four SDGs have a significant impact on entrepreneurship, which has an amplifying effect on economic growth and development. These are SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals). These goals

contribute to entrepreneurial success, while also benefiting from the economic growth and job creation that entrepreneurship cultivates. In the THE Impact Rankings, universities are evaluated on their research, teaching, operations and outreach related to the SDGs.

THE has conducted an analysis that aggregates institutions’ scores by country, income and region to map global trends and identify areas of success and places where more work is needed to foster SDG impact. In terms of these four SDGs – specifically SDGs 4 (quality education), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), and 17 (partnerships for the goals) – North America achieves the highest median score on all four SDGs most relevant to entrepreneurship (Figure 1). South Asia ranks second on SDG 4 (quality education), although most regions are clustered closely together on this parameter. While the Middle East and North Africa has similar median scores for SDGs 4, 8 and 17, SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) is the area that requires the greatest improvement.

The goals in which North America significantly outperforms other regions are SDG 9 (industry, innovation and

Figure 1: SDG 4, 8, 9, 17 – median score by World Bank region

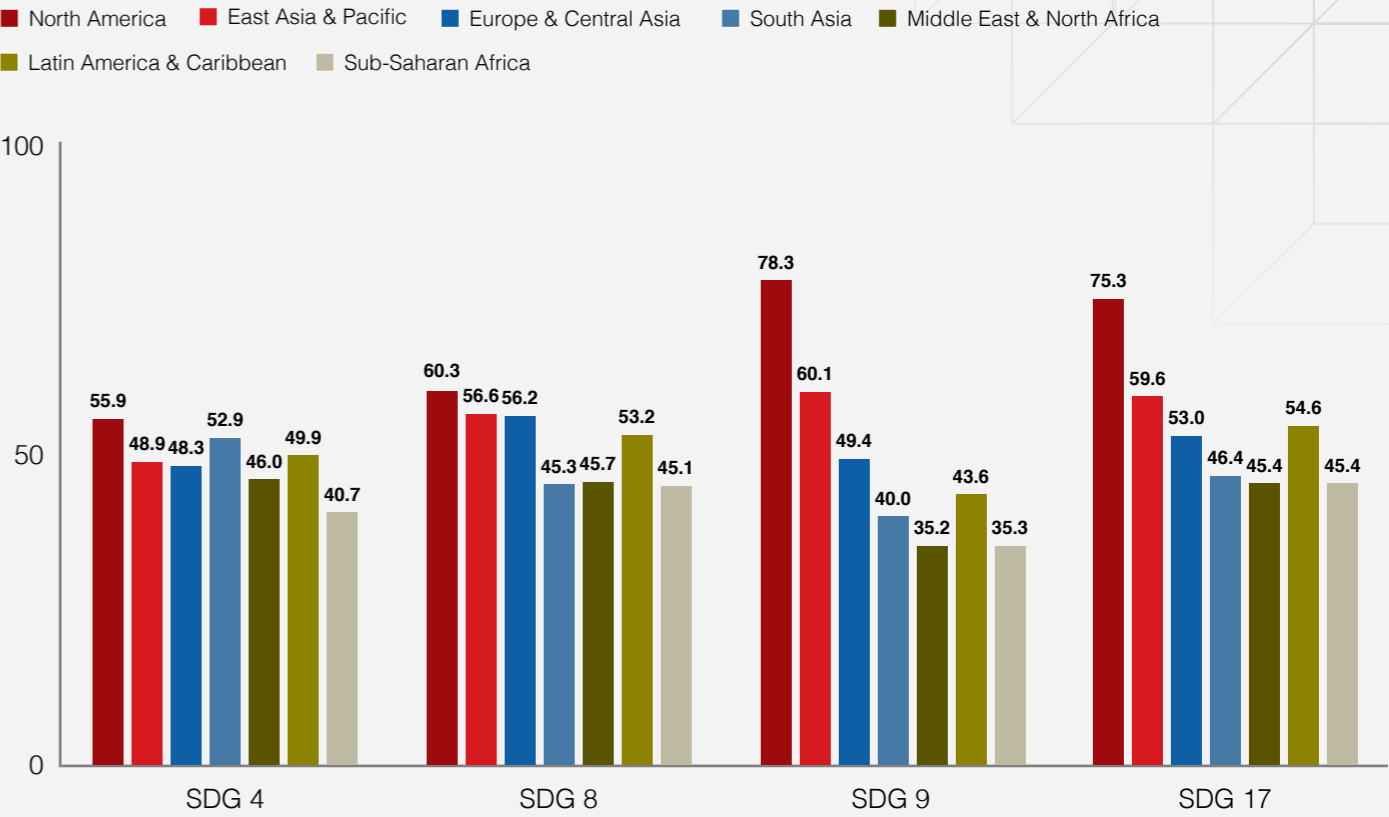
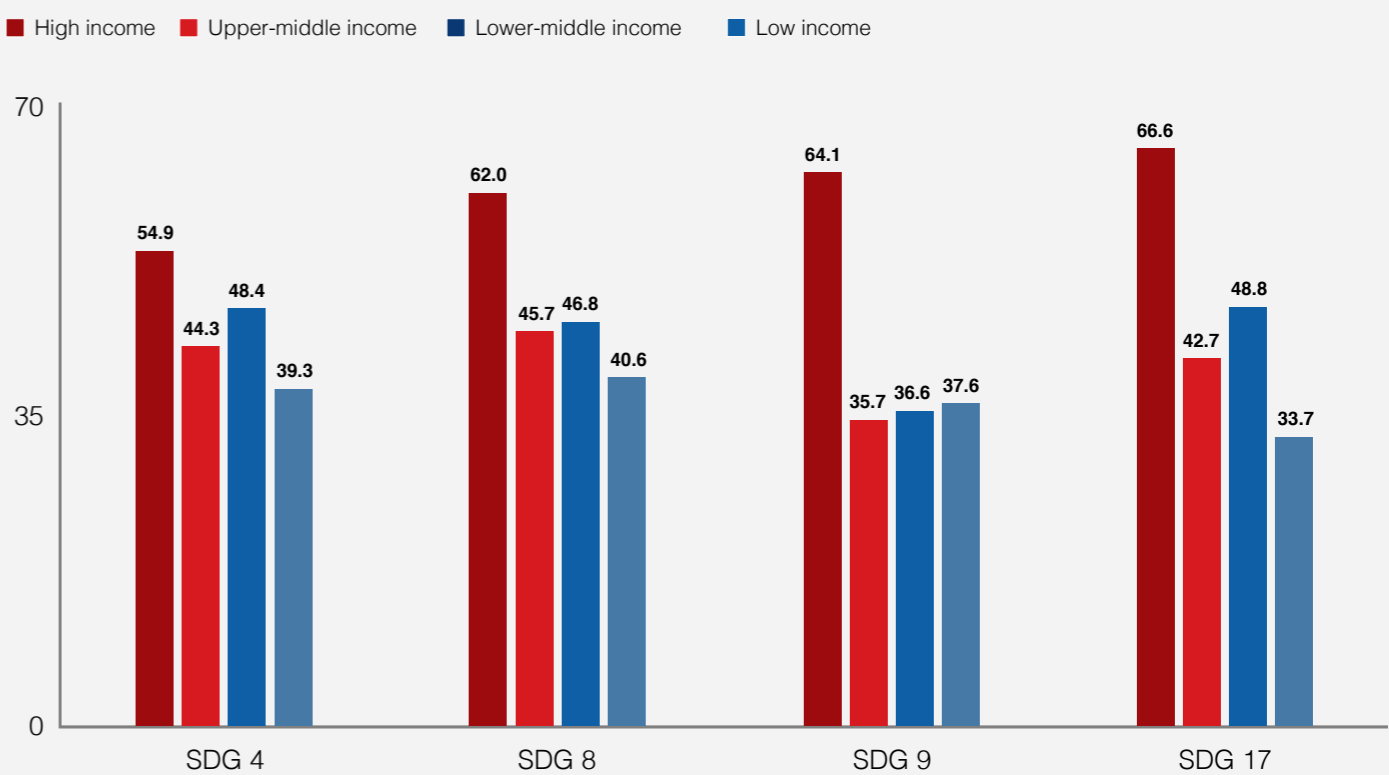


Figure 2: SDG 4, 8, 9, 17 – median score by World Bank income classification



infrastructure) and SDG 17 (partnerships). These goals, which are vital for entrepreneurship and consequently economic growth and job creation, are areas that require greater attention in other regions. For example, the Middle East and North Africa region struggles with these two SDGs compared to other regions, and the rankings highlight the need for higher education institutions to prioritise industry, innovation and infrastructure, and partnerships in their operations and decision-making.

In terms of income, high-income countries have the highest scores across all four SDGs. SDG 4 (quality education) has the smallest difference among high, upper-middle, lower-middle and low-income countries (Figure 2). SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) reflects the greatest disparity between income classification. High-income countries notably outstrip other regions, followed, interestingly, by low-income countries, which have the second-highest score for SDG 9. Upper-middle-income countries rank last in this metric. However, low-income countries have the lowest scores for the other three goals.

An important indicator of entrepreneurship is the number of university spin-offs, which falls under SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure). Start-up enterprises are hubs of innovation, knowledge commercialisation and economic activity, and have long-term impacts in their communities, as well as in terms of skills development and technology transfer. In this category, the THE Impact Rankings include registered companies set up to make use of intellectual property that originated within the institution. They must have been established at least three years prior and must still be active. North America tops the ranking by a significant margin (84.6), whilst East Asia and the Pacific trail North America by some distance (49) (Figure 3).

However, when it comes to individual countries with more than five ranked institutions, Germany outperforms all others, with a median of 100. Eight of the 12 ranked German institutions achieved a top score for the number of university spin-

Figure 3: University spin-offs, median score by World Bank region

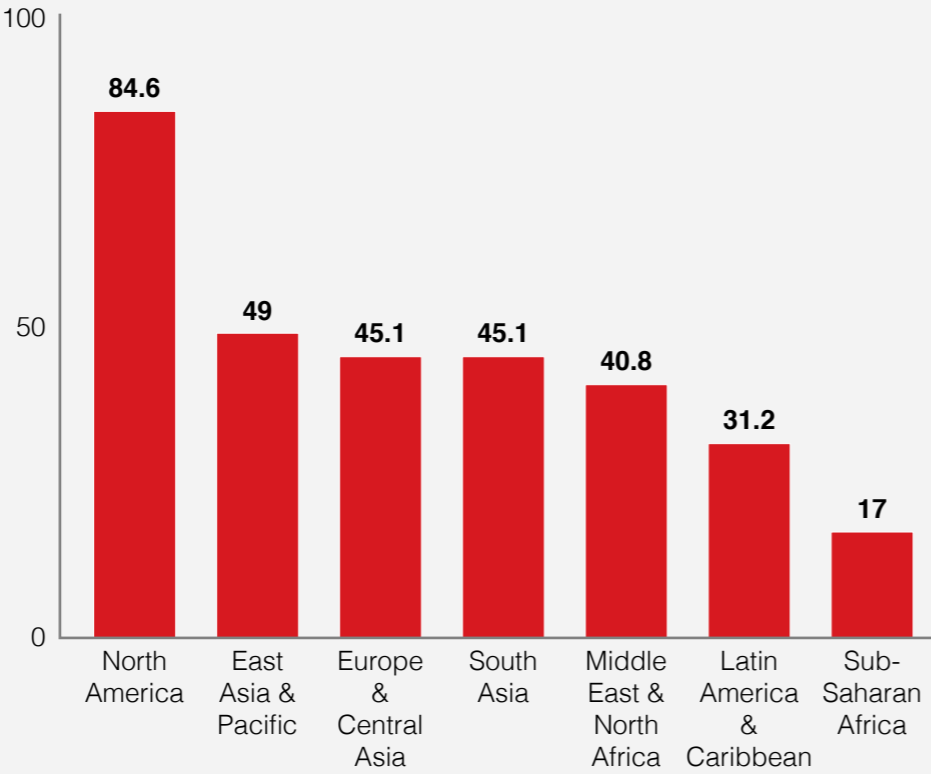
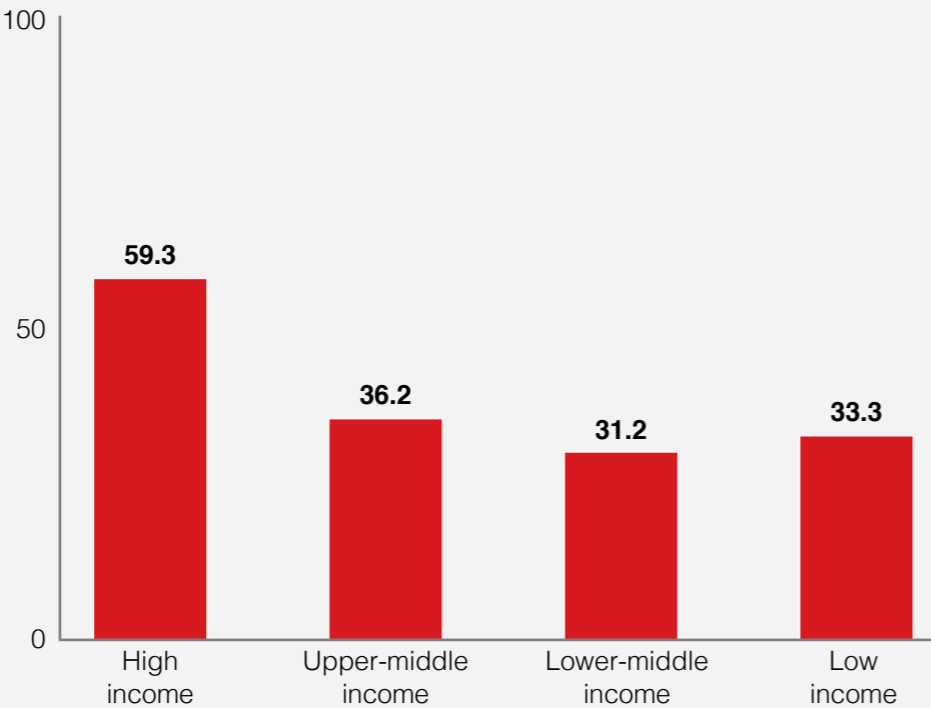


Figure 4: University spin-offs, median score by World Bank income classification



offs. Europe and Central Asia ties with South Asia for third place (45.1).

Despite the Middle East and North Africa (40.8) sitting in the middle of the ranking in terms of the number of university spin-offs, individual countries perform well. For example, Saudi Arabia (79.2) and Iran (77.6) appear in the global top 10 countries.

Once again, high-income countries dominate this category, although it is interesting to note that low-income countries came in third, outshining lower-middle-income nations (Figure 4).

North America (83.3) continues to lead in commitment to quality education (Figure 5). However, its median score in this area is more comparable to other regions than in other metrics. East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean are tied in second place (66.7). The remaining regions all drew for fourth place with 33.3. The highest median Middle East and North Africa country, with more than five ranked institutions, was Palestine (66.7), followed by Morocco (41.65). Kuwait only has four ranked institutions, so is not included in the analysis by country. However, the American University of the Middle East did score full marks for the evidence that it submitted.

Although Europe and Central Asia had a median score of 33.3, there are countries in the region with more than five institutions ranked that had a median score of 100 – the UK, Portugal, Ireland and the Netherlands.

When viewed through the lens of the World Bank's income classification, commitment to meaningful education falls into a similar trend as other categories (Figure 6). High-income countries dominate, while others trail by a wide margin. They come in with almost half the median score of high-income countries.

The THE Impact Rankings are a litmus test of countries and regions' contribution to the SDGs. They show that the higher education sector plays an important role in realising a sustainable future for all.

Figure 5: Commitment to meaningful education, median score by World Bank region

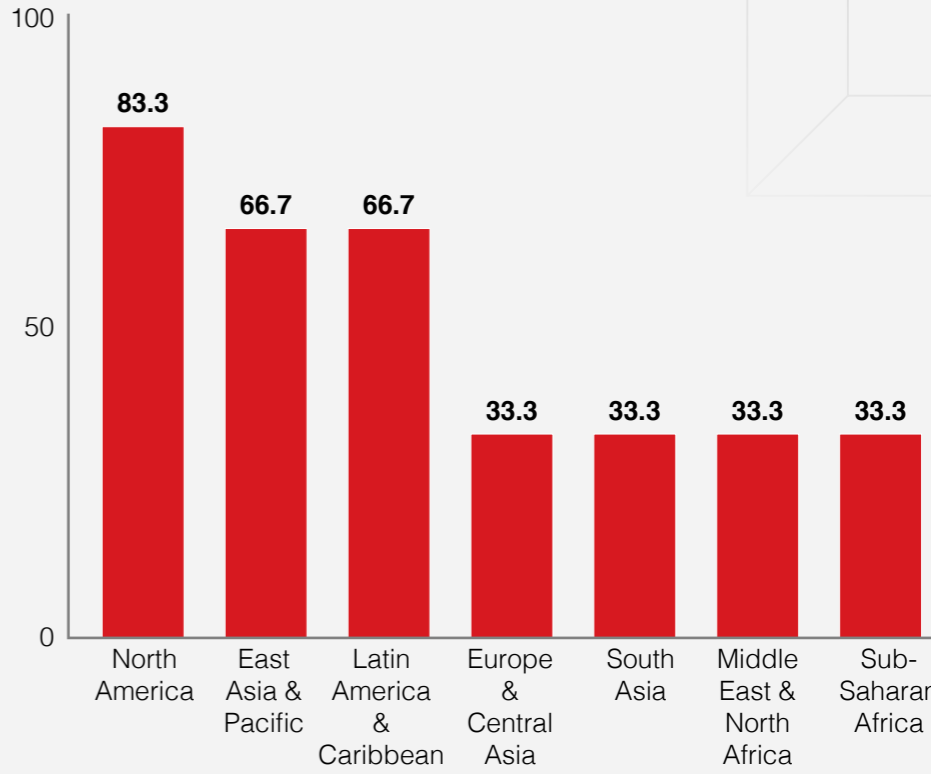
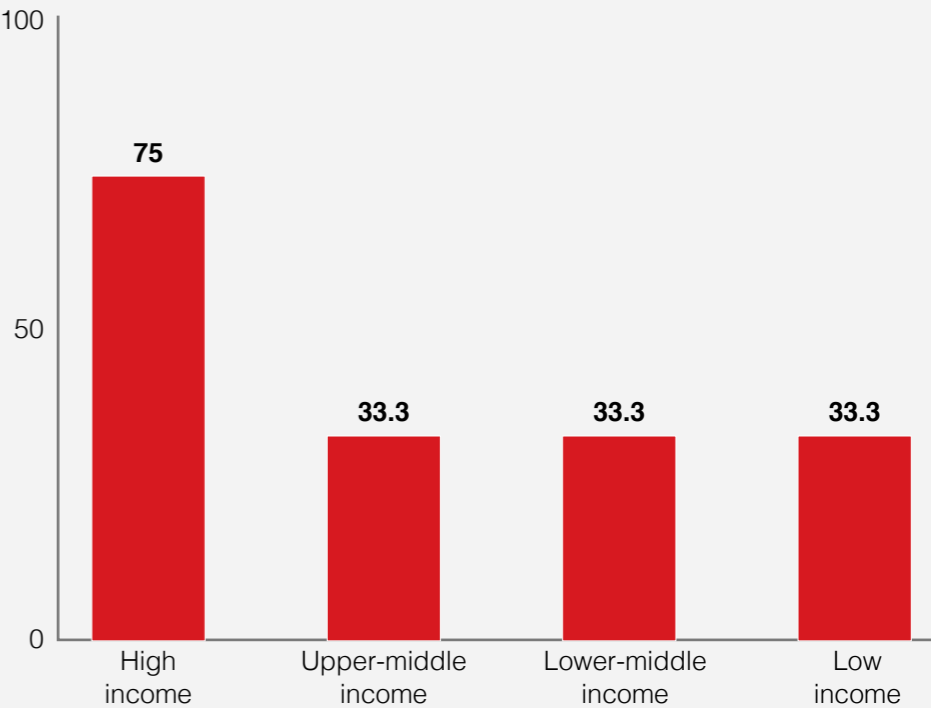


Figure 6: Commitment to meaningful education, median score by World Bank income classification



AUM PUTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT THE CENTRE OF ITS MISSION

FROM ITS CURRICULUM TO STUDENT CLUBS, AUM FOSTERS A CULTURE OF INNOVATION, LEADERSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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ince its establishment in 2005, the American University of the Middle East (AUM) has embraced entrepreneurship. It has sowed the seeds of entrepreneurship education and innovation across its business and engineering programmes.

"To achieve our mission, we adopt a learner-centered educational philosophy where we declare our aim to educate students to become confident leaders and entrepreneurs," says Georges Yahchouchi, president of AUM. "We equip our graduates with a solid intellectual and academic foundation beyond education by providing them with a stimulating learning experience."

This is in keeping with Kuwait's Vision 2035. Adopted in 2017, the country announced its ambition to transform Kuwait into a financial and trade hub regionally and internationally, and to become more attractive to investors, with the private sector taking a stronger role in the economy. Entrepreneurship is central to this plan as it encourages innovation, economic growth, diversification and job creation.

AUM has positioned itself as a pioneer in entrepreneurship education in the region and a hub for student development and international collaboration. The university has more than 10,000 students on a fully integrated campus. It has two colleges – the College of Engineering and Technology and the College of Business Administration – in addition to a Liberal Arts Department and an English preparatory programme.

Since 2021, AUM has hosted an Annual Startup Challenge, with more students



participating each year. More than 100 business and engineering students apply their skills and knowledge to tackle the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. In 2025, the winner of the AUM Annual Startup Challenge designed a wearable device to manage asthma, called Venus. It combines sensor technology and real-time alerts to give wearers actionable insights about their health. "The AUM Annual Startup Challenge exemplifies the university's expanded entrepreneurship footprint locally and regionally. It showcases students' startup project ideas, amplified by an entrepreneurial mindset, and reflects their perseverance for enhancing well-being and protecting the planet that has no plan B," says Yahchouchi.

In May 2024, three AUM teams participated in the Babson Collaborative Global Student Challenge and were included in the top 12 finalists globally.

The Babson Collaborative Global Student Challenge is a highlight of the AUM calendar, with student teams competing annually against their international peers.

AUM recognises the importance of international partnerships to ensure its students and staff are exposed to global best practice. "We bring the world to our students, helping them build entrepreneurial capacities, engage with peers and forge networks through active international collaborations with world-class institutions like Babson College and the University of California, Berkeley. We also celebrate and value the diversity of our faculty, who bring a global perspective and experiences to our students," says Yahchouchi.

In 2020, AUM became a member of the Babson Collaborative for Entrepreneurship Education, marking the beginning of a long-running partnership. Babson

College, a private business school in Massachusetts in the US, is a world expert in entrepreneurship education.

In 2022, AUM entered into a strategic collaboration with the AMENA Center for Entrepreneurship and Development at the University of California, Berkeley in the United States. The centre promotes entrepreneurship and innovation in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. In 2023, the AMENA Center awarded 60 AUM students with certificates in AI and entrepreneurship. The following year, a similar number completed the qualification, taught by UC Berkeley staff. In 2023, 23 AUM faculty were also part of a mentor training programme run by UC Berkeley to equip them with the skills needed for entrepreneurship accelerator programmes. Throughout the years, AUM has introduced systemic faculty professional development programmes to promote a culture of continuous learning among its staff.

AUM also participates in and organises events to share thought leadership and cultivate dialogue around entrepreneurship education. In 2023, the university organised the Global Symposium for Entrepreneurship Educators – the first edition in the Middle East and North Africa, in collaboration with Babson College. Forty-six participants attended the three-day symposium, including corporate partners, senior representatives from other higher education institutions in the region and AUM staff. In 2024, AUM participated in the Babson Collaborative Global Summit, hosted by ATLAS SkillTech University in Mumbai. During the four-day summit, educators shared best practice in pedagogy and thought leadership. In 2025, AUM arranged the AUM Global Symposium 2025, which explored the future of entrepreneurship in the AI era. This immersive two-day programme linked specialists and practitioners interested in entrepreneurship, with the aim of developing a cadre of distinguished experts in the field.

The institution has positioned itself as a hub of entrepreneurship and thought leadership within Kuwait and the region

more broadly. In 2023, AUM hosted the Kuwait Top Entrepreneurs Forum, with Forbes Middle East and Qabas, which brought together interdisciplinary experts and stakeholders to discuss disruptive trends and the challenges faced by businesses. In 2024, the university held the non-governmental organisation INJAZ Kuwait's Company Program competition, which teaches students entrepreneurial skills, prepares them for the job market and provides them with financial literacy skills. Two AUM teams received prizes, namely the Most Innovative Product award and the Best Social Media Platform award.

"Every aspect of campus life is given the utmost attention to serve as a source of inspiration. From environmental responsibility to the development of social and life skills, we nurture a culture of entrepreneurship by encouraging students to network with peers, club mentors, local entrepreneurs and beyond," says Yahchouchi. AUM runs many initiatives and clubs that foster this mindset and give students practical entrepreneurial skills. At the institution's annual Innovation Fair, students are given an opportunity to present their projects to their peers and faculty.

AUM runs innovation centres to expose students and faculty to the latest technologies. Its Business Innovation Center and Engineering Research and Innovation Center, which boast cutting-edge technologies such as robotics and nanotechnology facilities, host various student clubs. This includes the highly regarded Entrepreneurship Club, which was established in 2017. In 2022, AUM and UC Berkeley announced their plans to establish an AI and Innovation Centre at AUM.

Student clubs are highly valued at AUM as they have a significant impact on students' learning journeys. They offer a range of opportunities for students to develop entrepreneurship and innovation skills, enrich their digital literacy, discover new interests, showcase their abilities to local and international communities during competitions, connect with peers who share similar passions, and enhance student-faculty interaction.



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