

PRiME

*an initiative of the
United Nations Global Compact*

Sharing Information on Progress 2026

Al Akhawayn University School of
Business Administration

September 2026

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About the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)

The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) is a United Nations-supported initiative founded in 2007 that aims to raise the profile of sustainability in their classrooms through Seven Principles focused on serving society and safeguarding our planet.

PRME engages business and management schools to ensure they provide future leaders with the skills needed to balance economic and sustainability goals, while drawing attention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aligning academic institutions with the work of the UN Global Compact. Driven by its mission to transform management education, PRME equips today's business students with the understanding and ability to deliver change tomorrow. As a voluntary initiative with over 800 signatories worldwide, PRME has become the largest organized relationship between the United Nations and management-related higher education institutions.



“*The PRME initiative was launched to nurture responsible leaders of the future. Never has this task been more important. Bold leadership and innovative thinking are needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

Antonio Guterres

Secretary-General (2017 - Present)

United Nations

”

Principles of PRME



Purpose

We advance responsible management education to foster inclusive prosperity in a world of thriving ecosystems.



Values

We place organizational responsibility and accountability to society and the planet at the core of what we do.



Teach

We transform our learning environments by integrating responsible management concepts and practices into our curriculum and pedagogy.



Research

We study people, organizations, institutions, and the state of the world to inspire responsible management and education practice.



Partner

We engage people from business, government, civil society, and academia to advance responsible and accountable management education and practice.



Practice

We adopt responsible and accountable management principles in our own governance and operations.



Share

We share our successes and failures with each other to enable our collective learning and best live our common values and purpose.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In September 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted a plan for achieving a better future for all – laying out a path over the next 15 years to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect our planet. At the heart of Agenda 2030 are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 related targets that address the most important economic, social, environmental and governance challenges of our time. The SDGs clearly define the world we want – applying to all nations and leaving no one behind. Successful implementation of the SDGs will require all players to champion this agenda; the role of higher education is critical to this.





Getting Started

This section provides foundational information about Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration, including key details and basic institutional data.

Mission

SBA's mission is to: "Shape future, ethical and successful managers and leaders with a local and global perspective through a practical and learner-focused business education".

Vision

AUI's vision for 2025 places the university as a beacon in the Middle East and Africa as a Liberal Arts teaching model adapted to the 21st century with the motto "Better Value on Investment".

The SBA's revised vision, adopted with the launch of the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, is to become "a *leading business school in the MEA region by transforming individuals, business, and society*" – a deliberate expansion of the previous vision, reflecting the School's growing regional ambition.

Strategy

STRATEGY

SBA's strategy, outlined in the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, is organised around four pillars, each with defined goals, initiatives, KPIs, and assigned responsibility. The table below summarises the four pillars and their primary orientations.

Strategic Pillar	Strategic Focus	Selected Indicators
Learner-Focused Business Education	Practical learning, student success, technology, employability	Real-life learning opportunities; online/hybrid delivery; co-op/employment
Research Excellence with Impact	Research capacity, quality, dissemination and integration with teaching	High-quality publications; faculty research integrated into courses; external research funding
Societal Engagement & Impact	Curriculum, research and community engagement	Social-impact learning; societal-impact research; external/community engagement
National & International Presence	Mobility, faculty internationalisation, collaborations and positioning	Inbound international students; graduate exchange participation; international faculty/collaborations

Strategy Alignment

Alignment of strategic priorities

AUI's strategic priorities align with advancing sustainable development by promoting green practices and sustainability-focused research, with the common good through community engagement and civic responsibility, and with quality education through a global, liberal arts approach rooted in excellence and relevance.

Institutional History

History of AUI Morocco

We provide each student learning experiences that foster growth in both academic and personal development

Founded in 1993 by [Royal Dahir](#) (decree), Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane opened its doors to students in January 1995. Based on the principles of diversity and an international outlook, the university's mission is driven by values of human solidarity and tolerance. Al Akhawayn has modeled its administrative, pedagogical, and academic organization on the American university system, and English is the language of instruction. Still, in its infancy, the university has already developed a national and international reputation for its unique identity and potential.

Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane is an independent, public, not-for-profit, coeducational, Moroccan university committed to educating future citizen-leaders of Morocco and the world through a globally oriented, English -language, liberal arts curriculum based on the American system. The University enhances Morocco and engages the world through leading-edge educational and research programs, including continuing and executive education upholds the highest academic and ethical standards and promotes equity and social responsibility.

Graduates & Enrollment

2025 Statistics	Number
Graduates	356
Faculty & Staff at the University	600
Faculty & Staff at the Institution	69

2025 Statistics	Number
Student Enrollment at the University	3750
Student Enrollment at the Institution	1874
Undergraduate Attendance	1660
Masters-Level Postgraduate Attendance	214
Doctoral Student Attendance	0
Certificate, Professional Development, or Continuing Education Attendance	0

Degrees Offered

Bachelor Programs

 Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.)

Masters Programs

 Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)  Master of Science (M.Sc. or M.S.)

Undergraduate Degree Programmes

 Bachelor of Business Administration

Masters Degree Programmes

 Master of Business Administration  Master of Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics

Postgraduate Degree Programmes



Master of Business Administration



Purpose

We advance responsible management education to foster inclusive prosperity in a world of thriving ecosystems.

Letter of Commitment



School of Business Administration

SEPTEMBER 8TH, 2026

Adoption of the Principles for Responsible Management Education

To our stakeholders,

I am pleased to confirm that the School of Business Administration at Al Akhawayn University reaffirms its support of the following Seven Principles for Responsible Management Education: Purpose, Values, Teach, Research, Partner, Practice and Share. In this annual Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) report, we disclose our continuous efforts to integrate the Seven Principles into our institutional strategy, culture, academic activities, and daily operations, and contribute to United Nations goals, particularly in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Lakshmi Goel
Dean, School of Business Administration
Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane

Definition of Purpose

Purpose refers to the commitment of the Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration (AUI-SBA) to develop ethical, responsible, and capable managers and leaders who create sustainable value for business, society, and the environment. In alignment with the PRME Purpose principle, AUI-SBA seeks to ensure that business education contributes to inclusive prosperity and addresses the economic, social, and environmental challenges facing Morocco, Africa, and the wider global community. This purpose is embedded in the School's mission to shape future ethical and successful managers and leaders with a local and global perspective, and is supported by its core values of leadership, integrity, human development, diversity, and excellence

Institutional Engagement

26% - 50% of faculty at Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration actively contribute to our work with PRME, advancing responsible management education, or addressing sustainable development challenges through their work.



Values

We place organizational responsibility and accountability to society and the planet at the core of what we do.



How We Define Values

Our Business School is guided by six core values: student focus, integrity, diversity, human development, excellence, and commitment. We place students at the center of everything we do, creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment that responds to their academic, professional, and personal needs. Integrity underpins our teaching, research, and professional practices, fostering honesty, responsibility, and ethical decision-making. We value diversity and recognize the different perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences that enrich our academic community. Through human development, we seek to develop not only students' knowledge and professional competencies but also their confidence, critical thinking, leadership, and sense of social responsibility. Our pursuit of excellence encourages continuous improvement in teaching, research, innovation, and engagement with society.

Who Champions Responsible Management Education at Our Institution

- ❖ Disciplinary efforts within business school
- ❖ Interdisciplinary efforts across business school
- ❖ Interdisciplinary efforts across parent organization

Student Voices

The following narrative demonstrates how Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration has influenced students' academic journey and personal growth.

From Ifrane to Samarkand: A Moroccan Youth Delegate's Journey at UNESCO

Representing Morocco at the **14th UNESCO Youth Forum** and the **43rd General Conference in Samarkand, Uzbekistan**, **Hatim Lachheb** carried the voice of Moroccan youth to the heart of global dialogue on education, sustainability, and culture.

Nominated by the **Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection**, Hatim's participation reflected Morocco's strong commitment to youth engagement and sustainable development. His presence at UNESCO's global platform was the culmination of several months of preparation, collaboration, and dialogue with institutions and organizations that share a common conviction: that empowering young people through education, innovation, and environmental awareness is key to building a resilient and inclusive future.

During the Forum, Hatim contributed to discussions on the role of youth in advancing the **UN 2030 Agenda**, emphasizing the importance of cross-cultural cooperation and environmental responsibility. His participation not only highlighted Morocco's proactive stance on sustainability but also showcased the potential of Moroccan youth to lead meaningful change on the international stage.

Student Awareness

26% - 50%

of students at Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration are aware that we are a PRME Signatory Member.

Student Engagement

26% - 50%

of students at Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration actively contribute to our work with PRME, advancing RME, or addressing sustainable development challenges through their work.

Values Voices

Azrou Center for Community Development (ACCD) organized certified training sessions

As part of Al Akhawayn University's commitment to engaging with its socio-economic environment in the Province of Ifrane and the wider Middle Atlas region, the **Azrou Center for Community Development (ACCD)** organized **certified training sessions from October 15 to 18, 2025**, in collaboration with key local and international partners.

These **immersive workshops** aimed to strengthen the skills of project mentors supporting impact-driven initiatives and to rethink approaches to social entrepreneurship in territories undergoing transition. The program was implemented under a **collaboration agreement** between the ACCD and the Belgian NGO **Echos Communication**, alongside the **Provincial ANAPEC Agency in Azrou** and the **Provincial Association for Economic and Social Development in Ifrane**.

This intensive training brought together **30 participants**, including representatives of local associations, cooperatives, students with project ideas, and researchers in the field of **social and solidarity economy**. The initiative sought to reinforce social entrepreneurial capacities within the region, emphasizing that **social and solidarity economy** is no longer considered a marginal sector, but rather a **key driver of job creation, local resource development, and social cohesion**.

Encouraging the growth of cooperatives, social enterprises, and impact-oriented initiatives is especially crucial in **rural and peri-urban areas**, where such projects often serve as engines of **economic vitality and social innovation**.

The sessions were led by experienced trainers and experts from **Echos Communication, Coopplus Association**, and the organizations **Perform Up** and **IncubUp**.

Continue telling your story

AUI Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Sub-Pillar 6.E of AUI's Strategic Plan 2025-2030 focuses on applying UN Sustainable Development Goals.

AUI Contribution to UN Sustainable Development Goals Create new initiatives supporting the region in implementation of and commitment to UN Sustainable Development Goals. Major Projects 6.E.1 Quality education: Accreditation and scholarships for eligible students 6.E.2 No poverty: Support & expand the work of Azrou center 6.E.3 Zero hunger: Enhance the activities of Hand in Hand and charitable activities 6.E.4 Affordable & clean energy: Reduce carbon footprint 6.E.5 Gender equality: Increase female diversity 6.E.6 Good health & wellbeing: Expand coverage of medical caravan



Teach

We transform our learning environments by integrating responsible management concepts and practices into our curriculum and pedagogy.

How We Define Teach

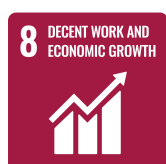
The BBA curriculum incorporates the guidelines of several external bodies. SBA is a PRME Africa signatory and reports annually on the integration of UN Principles for Responsible Management Education into teaching, research, and engagement. The Sustainable Development Goals are covered across the curriculum and research activities, with Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability (ERS) content embedded across disciplines at foundational, intermediate, and advanced levels; the Sustainable Development and Social Enterprise concentration provides advanced specialisation in responsible business practice.

Courses that support RME

Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration reports 2 courses in 2025 that support responsible management education and sustainable development goals.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE | SDE 3301

This course introduces students to the principles of sustainable development and the roles of social enterprises in addressing global and local challenges. It explores how businesses can create social and environmental value alongside financial returns, with a focus on ethical decision-making, impact measurement, and sustainability frameworks. Students will examine real-world case studies and innovative business models that drive social change. The course equips future business leaders with tools to integrate sustainability with core strategy and operations



Service Learning Program (SLP): Environmental conservation and sustainability: An Integrated approach

| SBA

This service-learning program is designed to immerse students in hands-on environmental conservation and sustainability projects, with a particular focus on recycling initiatives. By participating in this program, students will collaborate with local community organizations to tackle pressing environmental issues. They will engage in research, planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects, applying their academic knowledge to real-world situations. Throughout the program, students will develop leadership, communication, and teamwork skills while gaining a deeper understanding of the importance of sustainability at both local and global levels. Reflective exercises will allow students to connect their service experiences to

their academic and personal growth, equipping them with the skills needed to make a positive impact on their communities.

By the end of this service-learning program, students will have a comprehensive understanding of the importance of environmental conservation and sustainability at both local and global levels. They will be able to identify and analyze environmental issues, particularly those related to recycling initiatives, and develop and implement effective plans for conservation projects in collaboration with community partners. Students will also gain the skills to evaluate the impact of their projects, make informed recommendations for future improvements, and apply their academic knowledge in environmental science, policy, and ethics to real-world contexts.

Additionally, the program will enhance their leadership, communication, and teamwork abilities through active collaboration, while reflective exercises will enable them to connect their service experiences to their academic and personal development, articulating the growth they achieve throughout the program. The Interactivity Type for this service-learning program should be Collaborative and Experiential

Learning. This approach will engage students through hands-on participation in environmental projects, active collaboration with community partners, and reflective exercises that connect their experiences with academic learning. By working together on real-world sustainability initiatives, students will develop practical skills, enhance their understanding of environmental issues, and foster a sense of social responsibility.

This service-learning program is designed to provide students with hands-on experience in environmental conservation and sustainability projects, specifically focused on recycling initiatives. Through participation in this program, students will have the opportunity to work with local community organizations to address environmental issues in their community. Students will engage in a variety of activities, including research, planning, implementation, and evaluation of environmental projects, and will be expected to reflect on their experiences and learning throughout the program



Teaching Awards

In 2025, 1 award was given to faculty and educators at Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration.

2026 SBA Student Choice Award

Granter: AUI MOROCCO

Grantee: MARYEM NAILI

Award Description:

Dr. Maryem Naili shares her experience regarding teaching award: "In my teaching, I make a conscious effort to make finance more engaging, practical, and connected to the real world. I regularly use current financial news, real company examples, market developments, and classroom activities where students debate, discuss, and apply what we learn rather than only focusing on theory. I want students to feel that finance is something happening around them every day, not just formulas and concepts in a textbook. These activities usually generate strong discussions and help increase students' interest and curiosity.

I also try to create a supportive and approachable learning environment. I make myself available during office hours and beyond when students need clarification, academic guidance, or support with their projects and research.

I believe students may have chosen me for the award because they feel both challenged and supported in my classes. I try to maintain high expectations while remaining approachable, responsive, and genuinely invested in their learning experience."

Educator Recognition

At Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration, we recognize educators for quality of teaching in the following ways:

- ❖ Annual teaching excellence awards
- ❖ Faculty promotion and tenure consideration
- ❖ Professional development opportunities

Teaching Voices

The following statement demonstrates ways in which educators at Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration support sustainability and responsible management in their classrooms.

2025–2026 Presidential Teaching Excellence Award

Dr. Hind Lebdaoui won the 2025–2026 Presidential Teaching Excellence Award, one of the University's principal recognitions of pedagogical accomplishment. The award recognizes innovative course design and the classroom use of EdTech to engage students in their learning; assessment redesign that links course outcomes to program and school outcomes while measuring 21st-century skills; and

coaching-based advising that helps students develop a sense of purpose and direction. The award reflects the University's broader strategy of placing faculty innovation at the center of student engagement, self-fulfillment, and success.

Dr. Hind Lebdaoui completed the Advance HE Fellowship (FHEA) during the reporting period. The Fellowship is an internationally recognized benchmark of professional practice in higher education, awarded against the UK Professional Standards Framework. It recognizes sustained reflective practice, ongoing engagement with teaching professional development, and teaching that demonstrably benefits student learning across the University's programs.

Barriers to Innovative Curriculum

In 2025, Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration identified the following barriers to innovating, updating, or taking risks in existing curriculum:

- ❖ Faculty resistance
- ❖ Institutional culture
- ❖ Outdated infrastructure
- ❖ Overloaded faculty
- ❖ Resistance from students
- ❖ Resource allocation challenges
- ❖ Assessment challenges

Barriers to Innovative Pedagogy

In 2025, Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration identified the following barriers to innovating, updating, or taking risks in existing pedagogy:

- ❖ Classroom infrastructure limitations
- ❖ Change resistance
- ❖ Budget constraints
- ❖ Administrative hurdles

Continue telling your story

AI Akhawayn University Achieves Record-Breaking Performance on the Major Field Test (MFT)

At a time when universities worldwide are being reshaped by the rapid rise of artificial intelligence and its impact on skills, employability, and the future of entry-level jobs, higher education institutions are rethinking how they define and measure learning outcomes.

Two fundamental questions are at the center of this transformation: how should universities redefine the skills they aim to develop in response to new AI-driven realities, and how can the quality of learning be reliably ensured and measured?

In response to these global challenges, leading universities are increasingly turning to innovative approaches that combine experiential learning, close engagement with employers, international accreditation standards, and standardized global assessments. AI Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI) is actively contributing to this evolution by reinforcing its experiential learning model, through co-op education and work-based learning, while strengthening its quality assurance framework using internationally recognized benchmarking tools such as the Major Field Test (MFT).

Outstanding Results in a Global Benchmark Exam

AI Akhawayn University is proud to announce exceptional results in the Major Field Test (MFT) in Business, a globally standardized exam administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the same organization responsible for internationally recognized assessments such as the TOEFL, SAT, and GRE.

The MFT evaluates students' mastery of core business concepts, their understanding of key disciplinary knowledge, and their ability to apply theoretical frameworks to real-world business problems. It is widely used as a benchmark for academic performance at the end of undergraduate business programs.

This year's results demonstrate a remarkable upward trajectory, reflecting the sustained commitment of students, the pedagogical effectiveness of faculty members, and the strategic vision implemented by the School of Business Administration (SBA).

A World-Class Academic Performance

Among thousands of test-takers across multiple countries, 29 AI Akhawayn University students achieved a perfect score of 200/200, placing them among the top performers globally in Business education. This outstanding achievement contributes to strengthening Morocco's academic visibility on the international stage.

Overall, AUI students significantly outperformed global benchmarks. The university recorded an average score of 154, compared to the U.S. national average of 151.6 and the institutional average of 149.4 across 530 universities worldwide. In addition, more than 70% of AUI students scored above the U.S. national median, confirming the strength of collective performance across the cohort.

Notably, AUI's performance is 3.7 times higher than the average benchmark performance of U.S. universities, underscoring the exceptional quality of its academic outcomes.

A Confirmation of Academic Excellence and Pedagogical Innovation

These results highlight the excellence, discipline, and ambition of AUI students, while also reflecting the high standards of teaching within the School of Business Administration. They confirm the strong alignment of the SBA curriculum with leading international benchmarks in management education and demonstrate the effectiveness of a learning model designed to prepare students for highly competitive academic and professional environments.

They also showcase the dedication and expertise of the SBA faculty, whose commitment to academic excellence continues to shape high-impact learning experiences. Through this momentum, AUI is preparing graduates who are equipped to join top global business programs and succeed as future leaders in international organizations.

Strengthening AUI's Position as a Global Academic Reference

Al Akhawayn University welcomes these outstanding achievements, which further reinforce its position as a leading institution of higher education in the region and beyond. With an institutional average score of **154 out of 200**, surpassing both the U.S. national average and international institutional benchmarks, AUI confirms that Moroccan academic excellence is now fully competitive at a global scale.

These results reflect not only individual student success but also the strength of AUI's academic model, one that integrates experiential learning, rigorous assessment, and international standards to continuously elevate educational quality.



Research

We study people, organizations, institutions, and the state of the world to inspire responsible management and education practice.

How We Define Research

Research refers to the commitment of the Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration (AUI-SBA) to generate rigorous, relevant, and impactful knowledge that contributes to responsible management, sustainable development, and the advancement of society in Morocco and beyond. In line with the PRME Research principle, AUI-SBA conducts research that examines people, organizations, institutions, markets, and societal and environmental challenges, with the aim of generating knowledge that can inform responsible decision-making and improve management education and practice. This includes interdisciplinary, applied, and collaborative research addressing issues such as ethical and responsible business, sustainability, financial inclusion, digital transformation, entrepreneurship, diversity and inclusion, decent work, social and economic development, and other challenges relevant to Morocco, Africa, and the global community.

Research vs Research for RME/Sustainable Development



Research Funding

In 2025, Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration was awarded funding for research that is:



Regional



Local



National

Socializing Research

In 2025, Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration contributed research findings to:

- ❖ Government and policy makers
- ❖ Industry and business networks
- ❖ Open-access platforms
- ❖ Research collaborations

- ❖ Public events and lectures
- ❖ Social media and digital outreach

Research Projects

In 2025, Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration reported 2 research projects that implemented responsible or sustainable activities.

Erasmus+ Grant (€50,000)

Period Covering: August, 2025 - September, 2026

Department: Business Administration

Co-led by Dr. Wafa El Garah and Dr. Rhizlane Hammoud (SBA) supporting international academic capacity building and collaborative educational frameworks.

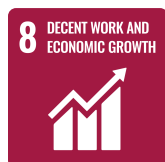


NAMA / Jawaher Fund for the Advancement of Women's Education (Total AUI Grant: \$100,000)

Period Covering: September, 2025 - October, 2026

Department: Business Administration

- SBA student researchers and faculty secured funding for high-impact regional development projects in the Fès-Meknès region, focusing on women's empowerment, poverty alleviation, and social inclusion.
 - ■ ■ *"Women-Led Cooperatives in Morocco: Evaluating the New Social and Solidarity Economy Framework for Poverty Alleviation and Women's Empowerment"* (Student Researcher: Marwa Belhadj).
 - *"Female Entrepreneurship (Cooperatives) and Its Impact on Financial Well-being and Sustainable Empowerment: Evidence from Ifrane and the Fès-Meknès Region"* (Student Researcher: Sami Amine).
 - *"Factors Influencing STEM Female Students' Enrollment, Persistence, and Academic Performance: The Role of Faculty Mentor Gender as a Moderator"* (Student Researcher: Manal Monecif).



Research Awards

In 2025, Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration was awarded 3 research awards for responsibility- and/or sustainability-related research.

Afretec Network awards research grant to Al Akhawayn University

Granter: AFRETEC

Grantee: AUI

Award Description:

Al Akhawayn University (AUI) has been selected as one of the award recipients of the 2025 African Engineering and Technology Network (Afretec) grants. The funded AUI research project will explore innovative wastewater treatment and digital monitoring. The AUI grant awardee will receive up to \$300,000 USD in funding.

The Afretec Network awarded \$2.3 million USD this year to multi-institutional research to increase Africa's digital and sustainable development. Directed by Dr. Nadia Arrousse of Al Akhawayn University School of Science and Engineering in Ifrane, Morocco, in collaboration with Dr. Hamed Hashemi of the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, the project is titled "Multilayer Biofilter System for Wastewater Treatment and Digital Monitoring in Africa."

The work has a vision of improving water quality inside Morocco and South African pisciculture (fish farming) facilities. It integrates biofiltration technologies with digital monitoring platforms to optimize water reuse as well as environmental sustainability in aquaculture. One of the core elements of the project is building designs for training open-access university graduates who are unemployed in the two nations.

The training programs will further boost African indigenous competence in water treatment technologies, complementing employment opportunities and a prolonged digitalization agenda. Since it first began in 2022, Afretec, led by Carnegie Mellon University Africa, has provided \$7.43 million USD towards collaborative knowledge creation initiatives ranging from artificial intelligence and machine learning to renewable energy. This latest announcement highlights AUI's contribution to applied research and its commitment to innovation and solutions to some of Africa's most pressing environmental and economic challenges.

2nd Best Student Paper Award

Granter: The International Marketing Association

Grantee: Mohamed Imad Boukhsibi

Award Description:

Al Akhawayn University undergraduates Maha Belkhaiate, Mohamed Imad Boukhsibi and Majd Bensaid proudly represented the University at the 16th Global Islamic Marketing Conference (GIMAC 2025), a prestigious Scopus-indexed, Springer-proceedings international conference held last week in Alanya, Turkey. Our talented students showcased the research papers they co-authored alongside leading international scholars, demonstrating exceptional academic rigor and innovation.

We are especially delighted to announce that Mohamed Imad Boukhsibi and Majd Bensaid earned the Second Best Student Research Paper Award, a remarkable achievement that reflects both their dedication and excellence.

A heartfelt congratulations to our outstanding students and to their exceptional faculty mentor, Dr. Hind Lebdaoui, Ph.D, for her invaluable guidance and mentorship.



SURP '26 Research Excellence Award (1st Place – Business Administration)

Granter: Office of Academic Research (OAR) AUI

Grantee: School of Business

Award Description:

Research Excellence Award for the Business School from the AUI Morocco

Research Presentations Related to RME and/or Sustainability

In 2025, Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration gave 1 research presentation related to RME and/or sustainability.

[HTML] from mdpi.com Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Performance and Financial Outcomes in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) Region: A Novel Decision Support Framework

Authors: Muhammad Ikram

Date of publication: April, 2026

Department: Management | Finance

The global landscape of sustainability challenges has become increasingly complex, characterized by varying regulatory frameworks and market maturity across different nations. The financial significance of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors is influenced by industry and firm-specific attributes. Therefore, this study employs an integrated decision support framework that combines grey relational analysis (GRA) models including Deng's GRA, absolute GRA, and a second synthetic grey relational analysis (SSGRA) with firm-level panel regressions to compare ESG and financial performance linkages across 11 Middle East and Africa (MEA) countries and industrial sectors. Furthermore, the study utilized a sensitivity analysis to check the robustness of SSGRG. Results indicate considerable variability in the relationships between ESG and financial performance across the region. The economies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) showed the most robust positive relationship between ESG factors and financial performance based on SSGRG, with Kuwait (0.82), Qatar (0.81), and Saudi Arabia (0.80) predominantly influenced by the social and governance dimensions. Conversely, a weak correlation was demonstrated in Egypt (0.54), Nigeria (0.53), and Kenya (0.56). Moreover, financials, communication services, and materials sectors exhibit the greatest integration of ESG factors into financial performance, with composite SSGRG values ranging from 0.75 to 0.78. In contrast, the information technology and energy sectors demonstrate weak association, with composite SSGRG values falling below 0.60.



Publications Related to RME and/or Sustainability

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Date of publication: April, 2026

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Furthermore, the study utilized a sensitivity analysis to check the robustness of SSGRG. Results indicate considerable variability in the relationships between ESG and financial performance across the region. The economies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) showed the most robust positive relationship between ESG factors and financial performance based on SSGRG, with Kuwait (0.82), Qatar (0.81), and Saudi Arabia (0.80) predominantly influenced by the social and governance dimensions. Conversely, a weak correlation was demonstrated in Egypt (0.54), Nigeria (0.53), and Kenya (0.56). Moreover, financials, communication services, and materials sectors exhibit the greatest integration of ESG factors into financial performance, with composite SSGRG values ranging from 0.75 to 0.78. In contrast, the information technology and energy sectors demonstrate weak association, with composite SSGRG values falling below 0.60.



Assessing Barriers to the Adoption of Green Technologies in Developing Countries by Using an Integrated Decision-Making System

Authors: Muhammad Ikram

Date of publication: June, 2026

Department: Business Analytics

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set a global agenda to advance sustainability by exerting environmental pressures and promoting cleaner production. Achieving these targets depends heavily on the adoption of green technologies, yet several persistent barriers continue to impede the effective implementation of green technologies. Therefore, this study develops an integrated decision support system to assess Green Technology Adoption (GTA) barriers and explore potential strategies to overcome them effectively. After reviewing the literature and consulting with field experts, seven major categories of barriers: institutional, financial, market, technological, regulatory, environmental, and social barriers, and 26 sub-barriers were identified and analyzed. A Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (FAHP) was applied to rank the main and sub barriers and then used the Fuzzy Vlekriterijumsko KOMPromisno Rangiranje (FVIKOR) method to prioritize the 11 potential solution strategies. The results reveal that financial barriers (FB), technological barriers (TB), and regulatory barriers (RB) are the most pressing, whereas natural resource dependency (EB1), limited institutional capacity (IB3), and climate challenges (EB2) were ranked the most influencing sub-barriers. Moreover, resilience programs for green tech jobs (S07) and investment in digital technologies (S06) ranked the top potential strategic solutions to mitigate the GTA barriers. This study provides actionable guidance for developing economies pursuing green transitions under economic and governance constraints, offering policymakers and practitioners a clear, systematic roadmap for designing resilient sustainability strategies.



A promise or paradox? Assessing corporate social responsibility and green marketing's impact on electronic word of mouth in emerging markets

Authors: Muhammad Ikram

Date of publication: February, 2026

Department: Marketing

As environmental awareness increasingly shapes consumer behavior, green marketing has emerged as a strategic tool for strengthening electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and brand loyalty. Yet, this approach carries a paradox: While it can build trust, it also risks skepticism if perceived as greenwashing. This study examines the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a mediator and consumer factors environmental values and attitudes toward green products as moderators in the relationship between green marketing, loyalty, and eWOM. Using survey data from 278 North African consumers, structural equation modeling (SEM) reveals that green marketing initiatives significantly enhance brand loyalty and eWOM, with CSR playing a pivotal mediating role. Consumer environmental values strengthen the impact of green marketing on brand loyalty, though they do not affect eWOM, while attitudes toward green products show no significant moderating effect. These findings highlight the need for authentic CSR integration to ensure green marketing fulfills its promise rather than reinforcing skepticism. By offering empirical insights from North Africa, an underexplored emerging market, this research advances understanding of the dynamics between green marketing, CSR, and sustainable consumer behavior.



The Impacts of ESG and CSR on Corporate, Financial, and Knowledge-Based Dimensions: A Systematic Review and Future Research Agenda

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Maryem Naili | Imad Jabbouri | Ilias Tafjouti | Aya Bassit | Issa Helmi

Date of publication: April, 2026

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Business Administration

In recent years, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) have risen to prominence as key elements in corporate strategies and policy discussions worldwide. These frameworks are increasingly central to firms seeking to meet contemporary expectations for sustainability and ethical business practices. This systematic review maps the discourse on the nexus between CSR/ESG practices and corporate performance and synthesizes an emerging knowledge-economy stream showing that ESG/CSR can function as knowledge assets by strengthening intellectual capital, fostering green innovation, and accelerating digital transformation and data transparency. Drawing on 150 studies across 78 peer-reviewed journals published between 1994 and 2025, the review identifies prevailing themes, pinpoints literature gaps, and proposes directions for future research. The evidence suggests that CSR and ESG, once viewed as peripheral, have become integral to corporate strategy, influencing outcomes ranging from financial performance and investor behavior to knowledge creation. Our synthesis reveals a central theoretical tension: while a dominant stream supports ESG/CSR as a knowledge-generating asset that strengthens intellectual capital and accelerates green innovation, another stream reports conflicting evidence consistent with symbolic adoption and measurement noise, where ESG primarily improves disclosure optics rather than capability building. We show that these inconsistencies are partly reconciled when ESG/CSR is examined through a Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE) lens that emphasizes intangible assets, learning, and digital verification infrastructure. Despite advances, significant questions remain unresolved, underscoring the need for further research on when and how sustainability initiatives translate into measurable value across industries and regions.



Economics of Residential Solar Photovoltaic Systems Adoption: Evidence from Morocco

Authors: Maha Belkhaiate | Youssef Oubih | Majd Bensaid | Mohamed Imad Boukhsibi | Mohammed Ali Afifi | Hind Lebdaoui | Youssef Chetioui

Date of publication: February, 2026

Presented at: National or international issue or theme-specific conference

Department: Business Administration

This study investigates the key factors influencing the adoption of residential solar photovoltaic (PV) systems by Moroccan households. Quantitative data were collected via surveys administered to 210 residential energy consumers across Morocco. Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The results indicate that relative advantages, compatibility, and observability significantly and positively influence the intention to adopt residential solar PV, while perceived

complexity negatively affects adoption. Trialability and perceived risk were not found to have significant impacts. Solar PV is perceived as both relevant and valuable, with consumer intentions shaped by perceived cost savings, environmental compatibility, and system visibility within communities. High initial costs remain a major barrier, highlighting the importance of financial incentives and better product design to improve accessibility, particularly for urban and apartment dwellers. Policy interventions and marketing should also emphasize environmental benefits to enhance adoption rates. This paper is the first of kind to define behavioral drivers in the context of Morocco.



Investigating Barriers to EV Adoption in Morocco: Insights from an Emerging Economy

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Sara Meskine | Hayat El Asri | Salah Al-Majeed

Date of publication: December, 2025

Presented at: National or international issue or theme-specific conference

Department: Business Administration

The global shift toward sustainable transport electric vehicles (EVs) is at the core of decarbonization efforts. While advanced economies have achieved their rapid adoption through strong policies and incentives, emerging markets face structural and behavioral barriers. This study investigates the paradox in Morocco, whereby a significant automotive capacity contrasts with a minimal domestic BEV market share of 0.6%, despite 143% growth from a small base, using a four-dimensional framework encompassing financial, infrastructural and energy, policy and institutional, and behavioral–social factors. The research integrates a literature review, a survey ($n = 522$), and secondary data on charging infrastructure and EV sales. Findings reveal a strong value–action gap: 69% of respondents acknowledged EVs’ environmental benefits yet only 1.1% owned one and 42% had considered buying. The high upfront costs of EVs influenced over 70% of participants, and a significant association was confirmed between charging availability and purchase intent ($\chi^2 = 34.80, p < 0.05$). Urban-centric charging, fragmented governance, and skepticism persist as barriers. The study concludes that industrial strength alone cannot ensure adoption without targeted incentives, equitable infrastructure, and cultural shifts in ownership perception, offering key insights for policymakers in emerging economies pursuing sustainable mobility.



Bridging the Gap: Machine Learning and Energy Management for Electric Vehicle Integration with Renewable Grids

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Sara Meskine | Hayat El Asri

Date of publication: January, 2026

Presented at: Regional or local academy of management

Department: Business Administration

The popularity of Electric Cars (EVs) is altering the future of transport by introducing a vision that effectively reduces GHG emissions and hence the carbon footprint. When the rate of EV adoption accelerates, there is a genuine chance of seeing major reductions in GHG emissions, and EVs play a critical part in this effort. However, like with most fast-rising sectors, there is an issue integrating EVs into current energy networks. A well-designed Energy Management System is required for optimal performance and easy communication with the energy network. The objective of this research is to discover such an EMS function in response to variable energy demand and supply while maintaining the integrity of the grid. Traditional rule-based and optimization-based EMS approaches are analyzed, revealing their limitations and the necessity for more dynamic and responsive solutions. Key technologies such as Bi-LSTM for load forecasting, reinforcement learning for optimal energy allocation and control, and vehicle-to-grid (V2G) for bidirectional power flow are explored.



Explainable Artificial Intelligence in Credit Scoring: A Novel Framework Integrating Decision Trees and LLMs

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Youssef Filali | Hayat El Asri

Date of publication: January, 2026

Presented at: National or international academy of management | National or international issue or theme-specific conference

Department: Business Administration

Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) is crucial in credit scoring to ensure transparency, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder trust. Traditional black-box models, despite their predictive accuracy, often lack interpretability, hindering the explanation of credit decisions. This paper presents a novel framework that integrates decision trees with large language models (LLMs) to enhance explainability in credit scoring applications. The decision tree generates clear decision paths that illustrate how financial attributes affect credit outcomes. These paths are translated into coherent, human-readable explanations using a GPT-based LLM. Our methodology involves data preprocessing, interpretable model training, extraction of decision paths, and LLM integration for explanation generation. The proposed framework achieves a testing accuracy of 71.77%, balancing interpretability with acceptable predictive performance. Qualitative evaluations demonstrate that the generated explanations are logically consistent, relevant, and easily understood by non-technical stakeholders, fulfilling ethical standards and complying with regulations like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Rokach, L., & Maimon, O. (2005). "Decision Trees." In *Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery Handbook* (pp. 165–192). Springer.) (Doshi-Velez, F., & Kim, B. (2017). "Towards a rigorous science of interpretable machine learning." *arXiv preprint arXiv:17,008,608*.). This approach addresses limitations of existing XAI methods by providing human-centered explanations and represents a significant advancement in responsible AI adoption within the financial industry.



Beyond Classrooms: Key Drivers of Civic Engagement among University Students

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Aya Taloaie | Hind Lebdaoui | Youssef Chetioui | Oumaima Banani

Date of publication: June, 2026

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Human Resource Management

The current research aims to examine the antecedents of civic engagement and social responsibility among Moroccan university students. Based on the social learning theory, an integrated model incorporating the key drivers of civic engagement among university students was developed. Data from 182 students from heterogeneous socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, and the conceptual model was analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Results reveal that academic performance, motivation, economic citizenship, social norms, and community connectedness influence civic engagement and social responsibility. Parental civic education, and student civic education were on the other hand not irrelevant. These results highlight the crucial role

that prosocial norms play in fostering civic behaviors among emerging leaders. Higher education institutions seeking to promote civic engagement should consider leveraging high-achieving students as role models and peer influencers.



Research Voices

The following statement demonstrates a way in which researchers at Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration bring sustainability and responsible management into their research.

Supervision of Students by Dr. Hind Lebdaoui (GIMAC 2025 RESEARCH AWARD)

Dr. Hind Lebdaoui states "Supervising these students has been a truly rewarding experience. Seeing Maha, Imad, and Majd present their research on an international stage and receive recognition for the quality of their work is a moment I am very proud of. For me, success in supervision goes beyond awards; it is about helping students develop the confidence, critical thinking, research skills, and curiosity to pursue their own academic journey. "

Research Barriers

In 2025, Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration identified the following barriers to conducting research related to sustainability and/or responsibility:

- ❖ Funding challenges
- ❖ Data access and management
- ❖ Publishing barriers
- ❖ Research impact and application
- ❖ Ethical concerns

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Al Akhawayn University Hosts ICEF'26, Advancing Global Dialogue on Energy Innovation

Al Akhawayn University (AUI), in partnership with Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University (Saudi Arabia), hosted the first edition of the International Conference on the Future of Energy (ICEF'26) on February 5–6, bringing together researchers, policymakers, and industry experts from around the world.

Held in a hybrid format, the conference welcomed over 150 participants from 20 countries, positioning Morocco as a growing regional hub for scientific research and sustainable energy innovation. ICEF'26 served as a platform for dialogue on energy transition, climate resilience, and next-generation energy technologies, aligning academic research with institutional and industrial perspectives.

The conference received 373 paper submissions, of which 156 were accepted following a rigorous peer-review process and presented across nine thematic sessions. All accepted papers will be published in Scopus-indexed proceedings by Materials Research Forum—a first for a conference of this scale in Morocco. In addition, selected papers will appear in leading international journals. ICEF'26 also strengthened academic cooperation between AUI and PMU, highlighting a shared commitment to collaborative research, innovation, and academic mobility between Morocco and Saudi Arabia.



Partner

We engage people from business, government, civil society, and academia to advance responsible and accountable management education and practice.

How We Define Partner

Partner refers to any external organization, institution, or stakeholder with whom the Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration (AUI-SBA) establishes a mutually beneficial relationship to advance responsible management education, research, professional development, and positive societal impact. In line with the PRME Partner principle, these partners may include business organizations, government institutions, civil society organizations, academic and research institutions, professional associations, alumni, and other community stakeholders. Partnerships should provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, collaborative research, experiential learning, internships, guest lectures, student projects, professional development, community engagement, and joint initiatives addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Institutional Partnerships

- ❖ EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development)
- ❖ Local institutions and associations
- ❖ Times Higher Education (THE)

Student Organization Partnerships

- ❖ Muslim Student Association
- ❖ PRME Students

Partnerships

The following provides more details on 1 key partnership at Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration.

NAMA Women Advancement

In the presence of *Her Highness Sheikha Jawaher bint Mohammed Al Qasimi*, Wife of the Ruler of Sharjah, *Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI)*, represented by President *Dr. Amine Bensaid*, and *NAMA Women Advancement*, represented by Director General *Mrs. Mariam Al Hammadi*, signed an agreement to establish the “Jawaher Fund for the Advancement of Women’s Education.”

The partnership establishes an annual research grants program dedicated to advancing women’s education and empowerment. The fund will provide a total of USD 100,000 to support AUI faculty members and students in developing innovative research projects across key disciplines, including Women’s Economic Empowerment and Leadership, Gender and Education, Digital Transformation and Inclusion, STEM, and Social Sciences projects with a gender-lens perspective.

The collaboration underscores AUI's and NAMA's shared commitment to empowering women through education, research, and sustainable development.

Partner Voices

The following statement from our partners demonstrates ways in which our collaborations at Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration support sustainability and responsible management education.

U.S. Mission Career Day” Connects AUI Students with Global Industry Leaders

On January 30, 2026, Al Akhawayn University (AUI), in partnership with the U.S. Embassy in Morocco, hosted the U.S. Mission Career Day, an interactive event designed to connect students with senior professionals from leading multinational companies, academic institutions, and investment organizations. The initiative offered students practical insights into global market dynamics and career pathways in an era shaped by rapid technological change.

Bringing Industry into the Student Experience

Organized by AUI's Office of Employability and Entrepreneurship, the Career Day welcomed 117 students and 15 senior professionals representing organizations such as Microsoft, Bank of Africa, IBM Morocco, Salesforce, EDF Renewables, JESA, Ingram Micro, and Bright Square Africa. Faculty members from UM6P, École Centrale Casablanca, and Université Hassan II also took part in the discussions.

The event reflected AUI's commitment to early exposure to the professional world, allowing students to engage directly with industry leaders across sectors including business, technology, finance, healthcare, and law.

“At AUI, our approach is simple: expose students early to the job market and bring industry to campus,” said Hanene Duprat, Director of Employability at AUI. “By engaging directly with leaders from multinational companies and diverse sectors, students gain a clearer understanding of how careers evolve, what skills matter, and how to position themselves in an increasingly competitive, technology-driven environment.”

Interactive Discussions and Real-World Insights

Designed as a highly interactive forum, the Career Day combined strategic discussions on global market trends with open exchanges between students and professionals. Rather than a traditional lecture format, the sessions encouraged candid conversations, practical advice, and personal reflections on navigating careers in fast-changing professional environments.

Speakers highlighted the importance of adaptability, purpose-driven careers, and continuous learning, offering students a realistic view of professional life beyond job titles and salary expectations.

Strengthening Long-Standing Partnerships

Beyond student engagement, the event also reinforced collaboration between Al Akhawayn University, the U.S. Embassy in Morocco, and participating organizations, opening the door for continued initiatives around mentoring, employability, and professional development.

“We launched this program with Al Akhawayn University because of our strong record of collaboration and AUI’s emphasis on the American model of higher education,” said Muhammad Shahbaz, Cultural Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Rabat. “This initiative also coincides with the 250th anniversary of U.S. independence and Morocco’s recognition of that independence, highlighting the long-standing ties between our two countries.”

Panelists echoed the value of this exchange, including Amal Benaïssa, PhD, Director of Sustainability Advocacy at Bank of Africa, who emphasized the impact of authentic dialogue between students and professionals.

“Unlike a traditional lecture, listening to professionals who have gone through their careers ,and who can put themselves in students’ shoes , helps future graduates understand what a career means beyond titles or salary,” she noted.

The U.S. Mission Career Day illustrates Al Akhawayn University’s Liberal Arts and Sciences model, which places critical thinking, interdisciplinary learning, and early engagement with real-world professional environments at the heart of student development.

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Practice

We adopt responsible and accountable management principles in our own governance and operations.

How We Define Practice

Practice refers to the commitment of the AI Akhawayn University School of Business Administration (AUI-SBA) to apply the principles of responsible, ethical, and accountable management within its own governance, decision-making, and day-to-day operations. In line with the PRME Practice principle, AUI-SBA seeks to ensure that the values it promotes through teaching and research are reflected in how the School operates and engages with its stakeholders. This includes promoting integrity, transparency, diversity, inclusion, student-centered decision-making, ethical leadership, social responsibility, environmental sustainability, and continuous improvement in institutional practices

Institutional Policies and Practices

- ❖ Buildings/real estate
- ❖ Greenhouse gas emissions
- ❖ Travel guides
- ❖ Water

Policy Documents Related to RME and/or Sustainability

Screenshot 2025-09-16 at 23.51.02

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Practice Awards

In 2025, AI Akhawayn University School of Business Administration received 1 award for responsible and/or sustainable practices.

AICADEMIC Startup Challenge

Granter: American University in Dubai

Grantee: Ihab Elbani

Award Description:

So I competed in AICADEMIC Startup Challenge 2026 fully online while everyone else was in Dubai. The final stage landed right in the middle of my finals, and I literally had an Algorithms exam the same day as the last round. I was waking up at 5 AM every day that week just to make it to the sessions and get the pitch ready for Flouss, then going back to studying right after. I didn't want to skip either one so I just did both, and still did well on the exam. Ended up winning first place, plus prize money and an internship in Dubai.

a solo-founded fintech application already live on the Apple Store, claimed first place for its strong execution and early market traction, earning AED 4,000 and an exchange opportunity at George Washington University.

AUD announced the win first. Then at AUI's commencement, I was watching it on YouTube with my family, and out of nowhere I hear my name and the award get mentioned by the president in front of everyone.

Practice Voices

The following statement from stakeholders at AI Akhawayn University School of Business Administration demonstrates our commitment to sustainable and responsible practices.

Ventures Adventure 2026

AI Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI) hosted the 9th edition of *Ventures Adventure*, its flagship entrepreneurship program, from April 23 to 25, 2026.

This semester's edition brought together 40 student-led startups, driven by more than 60 entrepreneurs, and delivered one of the strongest outcomes to date. In total, the program generated **157 contributions from business angels and industry partners, including 12 equity investment proposals**, reflecting both the quality of the projects and the level of engagement from the ecosystem.

"We saw a clear shift in the maturity of the projects," said **Mahmoud Tatari, Lead Coach of Entrepreneurship at AUI**. "Teams are more disciplined, more consistent, and more capable of refining their ideas over time. There's also growing participation from younger students, along with stronger interest in AI and emerging technologies."

Following the final round, **21 startups will continue to be supported**, including **10 finalists identified as the most promising**, across sectors such as fintech, healthtech, sportstech, edtech, tourism, and AI-driven solutions.

Projects like **ScrumIQ**, led by *Ziad Ezzerqui*, an AI platform for sports training, **Flouss**, led by *Ihab Elbani*, a personal finance app tailored to the MENA market, and **GuideGo**, led by *Achraf Ouhdidou and Abdelhadi Marjane*, a gamified city exploration app, reflect both the diversity and the level of execution demonstrated by AUI students.

Teams also secured access to a range of follow-up opportunities, including **mentorship, technical support, client connections, and strategic guidance**. Several startups were also offered pathways to **incubation, partnerships, and early market entry**.

"Today, what matters is not just funding, but execution," said **Nabil Bennis, Founder and CEO of Genesis Founders, a Moroccan venture studio**. "The ability to work closely with founders, support them day-to-day, and help them build is what creates real value. We've identified several high-potential projects that we are ready to support in the long term, by giving them access to our teams, our network, and our expertise."

Building an ecosystem beyond the competition

Beyond the competition itself, *Ventures Adventure* contributes to the broader development of a university-based entrepreneurship ecosystem by connecting students, mentors, investors, and institutions within a shared space for exchange and experimentation.

“What stood out to me is the students’ ability to adapt, innovate, and quickly engage with real market conditions,” noted **Dr. Hind Salih, Co-Founder of ABCURR Entrepreneurial Institute in Dubai**. “We can no longer teach entrepreneurship the same way. It is essential to integrate more practical approaches, bring students closer to the market, and support them in turning ideas into concrete projects.”

For student entrepreneurs, the program also serves as a direct acceleration platform.

“Ventures Adventure allowed me to connect with key stakeholders and quickly turn opportunities into tangible deals,” said **Ziad Ezzerqui, SSE student and founder of ScrumIQ**. “I signed an agreement with an investor, ABRID Inc., a U.S.-based company, which will support me on the technical, legal, and business sides, including access to Station F, the world’s largest startup campus in Paris. It’s a real step forward for my project.”

A core pillar of the AUI experience

Entrepreneurship at AUI is not limited to a single event. It is embedded throughout the student journey. Since the start of the academic year, **70 mentors have been mobilized, 31 startups have received structured support, and more than 500 students have participated in Ventures Adventure-related activities**, including workshops, coaching sessions, and mentoring programs led by the Office of Employability and Entrepreneurship.

“Through all its programs, our Office is driven by a dual ambition: **supporting student entrepreneurship and helping them develop an entrepreneurial mindset**, while also **strengthening students’ employability and readiness for the professional world**. These initiatives create a direct link between academic learning and real-world conditions,” said **Hanene Duprat, Director of the Office of Employability and Entrepreneurship at AUI**.

This approach reflects AUI’s **Liberal Arts & Sciences model**, which emphasizes critical thinking, adaptability, and interdisciplinary learning. Within this framework, entrepreneurship becomes a way of approaching problems – not only for founders, but for all students not matter their professional journey.

Most Promising Startups of the 9th Edition of Ventures Adventure

LifeOS — led by *Taha Elmouaaouy, Mohamed Reda Hmamouchi*

An AI-powered platform centralizing task management, health, and personal organization to reduce mental load and improve productivity.

Flouss — led by *Ihab Elbani*

A personal finance management app tailored to the MENA market, helping users track expenses and manage budgets.

GuideGo — led by *Achraf Ouheidou, Abdelhadi Marjane*

A mobile app transforming city exploration into an interactive, gamified experience.

RevMax — led by *Othmane Hilaly*

A revenue management tool for hotels, using data to optimize pricing and profitability.

Monqida — led by *Douae Lanaya*

An AI-based solution predicting the deterioration of fresh products to reduce waste and financial loss in retail.

Ananke Labs — led by *Zakaria Chadli, Charaf Eddine Moujahid*

A document management and verification platform enhancing traceability and reducing fraud risks.

ElegWear — led by *Fatima Zahra Baayou, Douaa Moutawakkil*

An intelligent styling app that analyzes wardrobes and suggests personalized outfits based on context and preferences.

UrEd — led by *Nada Bennani*

A post-secondary guidance platform combining assessments and practical experiences to support student decision-making.

ScrumIQ — led by *Ziad Ezzerqui*

An AI-powered platform enabling coaches and rugby players to generate training plans and analyze performance using data and video.

Cinelion — led by *Abir Nejjar*

A cultural initiative aimed at revitalizing the artistic and cultural landscape in the Fès-Meknès-Ifrane region.

Continue telling your story



Ventures Adventure 2026



Share

We share our successes and failures with each other to enable our collective learning and best live our common values and purpose.



How We Define Share

Share refers to the commitment of the Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration (AUI-SBA) to openly communicate and exchange its experiences, achievements, challenges, successes, and lessons learned in responsible management education and practice with its stakeholders and the wider PRME community. In alignment with the PRME Share principle, AUI-SBA seeks to create opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and mutual learning with students, faculty, alumni, business organizations, government, civil society, and academic partners.

Engagement Opportunities

Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration offers transparent engagement opportunities for members of our institution and community to contribute to our sustainability and responsibility efforts in the following ways:

- ❖ Annual reports
- ❖ Feedback mechanisms (e.g., surveys, suggestion boxes)
- ❖ Partnerships with local organizations

Communication Audiences

Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration communicates its policies and progress on sustainable development and responsibility with:

- ❖ Accreditation bodies
- ❖ Boards and advisory committees
- ❖ Faculty and staff
- ❖ Government and policy makers
- ❖ Media and public relations channels
- ❖ Prospective and current students
- ❖ Research and academic networks

Sharing Voices

The following statement from stakeholders at Al Akhawayn University School of Business Administration demonstrates our commitment to sharing and learning from sustainability and responsible management practices.

Digital Innovation Lab Opening

AI Akhawayn University has opened a new Digital Innovation Lab at its Ifrane campus, giving students and researchers a place to work on practical digital challenges facing Morocco and the region.

The Lab was inaugurated on 10th February and signals the university's growing focus on digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity, and responsible AI.

The space is part of the UpanziNetwork, led by Carnegie Mellon University Africa, which connects institutions working on digital public goods and identity systems. Through the partnership, AUI expects to strengthen hands-on research and student projects linked to broader digital transformation efforts across Africa.

The Lab itself is set up as a working environment, rather than a formal research center. It includes shared workstations, large interactive screens, a small demonstration area, and flexible space to host workshops, meetings, and student presentations. The idea is to give teams somewhere they can test and build ideas, not just discuss them.

Representatives from the Open Government Partnership, Women in AI Morocco, and the Upanzi Network attended the launch event and spoke about the need to strengthen local expertise in digital identity, ethical AI, and cybersecurity.

The Lab is open to students from different disciplines and is intended to bring together public institutions, civil society organizations, and international collaborators.

Plans for the coming year include hosting the North Africa Digital ID Hackathon and organizing the AI & Society International Symposium, both expected to bring together researchers and practitioners working across technology and governance.

University leaders say they hope the lab will grow into more than just another campus facility, leading to the creation of student-built tools, research that feeds into key policy discussions, and partnerships that turn academic work into usable solutions beyond the university.

Communication Barriers

AI Akhawayn University School of Business Administration faces the following barriers in transparent communications:



**Bureaucratic
delays**



**Data privacy
regulations**



**Transparency
hesitation**

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Second Afretec Skill Tech initiative at Al Akhawayn University

Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI) has launched the second edition of its Tech Skills Marketplace—MSME Paid Internship Program, an initiative by the African Engineering and Technology (Afretec) Network that is redefining the business-student collaboration model in Morocco.

Embracing a broader scope with a deeper impact, the program is surging forward after the success of its first edition at the University.

The main subject of the Tech Skills Marketplace is ‘connection,’ bringing students that have the skills and knowledge together with business start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in need of practical technology solutions.

The program integrates paid internships, authentic industry challenges, and close cooperation between academia and the private sector in Morocco.

This year the initiative is featuring collaborating students from AUI's School of Science and Engineering (SSE) and School of Business Administration (SBA), with 45 start-ups also participating. Besides technical skills, such as programming, software development, problem-solving, innovation, and data analytics, the initiative focuses on employability.

Professor Salah Al-Majeed, Dean of AUI's School of Science and Engineering, commented, “By working directly with local, regional, and national businesses, students gain a more definitive insight into what's expected of them in the workplace while learning more about entrepreneurship and market dynamics.

“These experiences aren't always accessible in a traditional academic setting, and for many participants, the Tech Skills Marketplace is their stepping-stone from student life into a professional career.”

The program's implementation has been made possible through the financial support of the Afretec Network, AUI's continued collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University Africa, and the Mastercard Foundation.

Faculty, deans, and the implementation team at Al Akhawayn University have worked closely to make sure that the program meets both student aspirations and business needs.

Tech Skills Marketplace is a continuation of the previous Afretec-backed programs AUI has supported and is a reflection of the university's long-term commitment to youth empowerment, experiential learning, and innovation.

In addition, it embodies a common belief that stronger links between universities and industry are vital to helping construct a resilient, innovation-driven economy in Morocco.

SIGNATORY

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