



Office of **Faculty Excellence and Advancement (OFEA)**

Newsletter

Excellence. Advancement. Community.

Welcome to the March issue of the OFEA faculty newsletter.

March was a period that required adaptability and steady coordination across the MBZUAI community. Throughout this time, faculty continued to demonstrate professionalism, continuity in teaching and research, and strong support for students and colleagues.

This issue highlights key faculty achievements, recent engagement opportunities, and upcoming events.

Welcome to our new faculty

Join us in welcoming our new faculty members who joined MBZUAI recently.



Alla Mikheenko
Assistant Professor of
Computational Biology
[Bio](#)



Anil K. Jain
Adjunct Distinguished
Professor of Computer
Vision
[Bio](#)



Nikolaos Kyrprides
Assistant Professor of
Computational Biology



Arnak Dalalyan
Visiting Professor of
Statistics and Data
Science
[Bio](#)



Serghei Mangul
Affiliated Assistant
Professor of
Computational Biology
[Bio](#)

Faculty achievements and highlights

Throughout March, MBZUAI continued spotlighting members of our faculty community across social platforms and at the all faculty meeting!

Recent highlights include MBZUAI's new joiner [Anil K. Jain](#), **Adjunct Distinguished Professor of Computer Vision**. Professor Anil K. Jain is a global pioneer in pattern recognition and biometric identification. His work has shaped the foundations of modern fingerprint, face, and multimodal recognition systems used worldwide, with impact spanning national identity systems, healthcare, and digital security.

A University Distinguished Professor at Michigan State University and member of the U.S. National Academy of Engineering, Professor Jain joins MBZUAI with a longstanding record of scientific leadership and real-world impact.



Congratulations go to...

[Peter Song](#), who was named 2025 Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). He is recognized for his distinguished contributions to methodological, theoretical, and applied statistics and data science, particularly in advancing approaches for complex data in medical and public health sciences.



[David Basin](#), who received the 2026 Levchin Prize for Real-World Cryptography for Tamarin – an open-source tool for the formal, symbolic analysis of security protocols which supports both the identification of potential attacks and the construction of formal proofs. Tamarin has been used to model and analyze real-world protocols such as 5G, TLS, EMV, and iMessage PQ3



Across March, faculty highlights included:

- 1 best paper award:

Congratulations to Assistant Professor [Samuel Horvath](#) for winning the Charles Boyden Prize for this paper titled “Stochastic distributed learning with gradient quantization and double-variance reduction”. This prize is awarded annually to the best paper published in the journal from the previous year.

- 87 publications in top-tier venues
- 3 external grant awards
- 50 conference organization and leadership roles

These milestones reflect continued research output, leadership, and global engagement across the university.

Your engagement helps amplify the visibility of our faculty and the broader work of the University.

Advancement opportunities

Post-Tenure Pathfinders Program – Summer 2026

OFEA is offering a limited opportunity for **mid-career faculty (Associate and Full Professors)** to participate in the *Post-Tenure Pathfinders Program*, a 12-week virtual program designed to support reflection, career direction, and long-term planning.

The program focuses on:

- Clarifying future career direction and priorities
- Strengthening leadership and decision-making
- Reconnecting with long-term goals and motivation
- Building a network of peers at similar career stages

Expression of interest deadline: 13 April, 2026

Registration deadline: 13 May, 2026

Program start: 18 May, 2026

More information: <https://www.ncfdd.org/programs/post-tenure-pathfinders/>

Faculty interested in being considered are invited to reply to OFEA to express interest and receive further details.

MBZUAI Innovation Program

The MBZUAI Innovation Program supports the translation of research into high-impact innovation projects, with **funding of up to AED1m** available to faculty.

The program is designed to accelerate promising ideas beyond the research stage, supporting development, validation, and real-world application.

Faculty interested in learning more or exploring potential submissions are encouraged to reach out directly to Ramzi Ben Ouaghrem at Ramzi.BenOuaghrem@mbzuai.ac.ae.

External Funding Opportunities for March 2026

Find below a list of March 2026 external funding update, highlighting upcoming sponsor deadlines and recurring opportunities to support early planning and proposal development.

Key deadlines include:

Microsoft – AI Economy Institute (AIEI) Open Call 3

- Deadline: 23 March, 2026
- More information: [AI Economy Institute - Microsoft Research: Aiei Open Call 3](#)

Google.org – AI for Government Innovation

- Deadline: 3 April, 2026
- More information: [Google.org Impact Challenge: AI for Government Innovation](#)

Google.org – AI for Science Impact Challenge

- Deadline: 17 April, 2026
- More information: [Google.org Impact Challenge: AI for Science](#)

Schmidt Sciences – AI for Actionable Matter Modelling

- Deadline: 30 April, 2026
- More information: [2026 AI for Actionable Matter Modelling RFP](#)

Schmidt Sciences – Science of Trustworthy AI

- Deadline: 17 May, 2026
- More information: [2026 Science of Trustworthy AI RFP - Schmidt Sciences](#)

Recurring opportunities from organizations such as Amazon, ADIA Lab, Dubai Future Foundation, and the National Center of Meteorology are also expected throughout 2026.

Amazon Research Awards (ARA) – Spring 2026

The Amazon Research Awards (ARA) support cutting-edge research across AI and emerging technology domains, including information security, agentic AI, robotics, and ML systems.

Funding and support:

- Unrestricted funding (~\$50K–\$100K)
- AWS credits (up to \$250K+ for select tracks)
- Access to Amazon research expertise and resources

Key dates:

- Pre-award support deadline (optional): 29 April, 2026
- Sponsor deadline: 6 May, 2026

Eligibility:

- One proposal per faculty member (Primary PI)
- One co-PI permitted

Faculty intending to submit should share a copy of their proposal with the Office of Sponsored Research at osr@mbzuai.ac.ae for coordination and support.

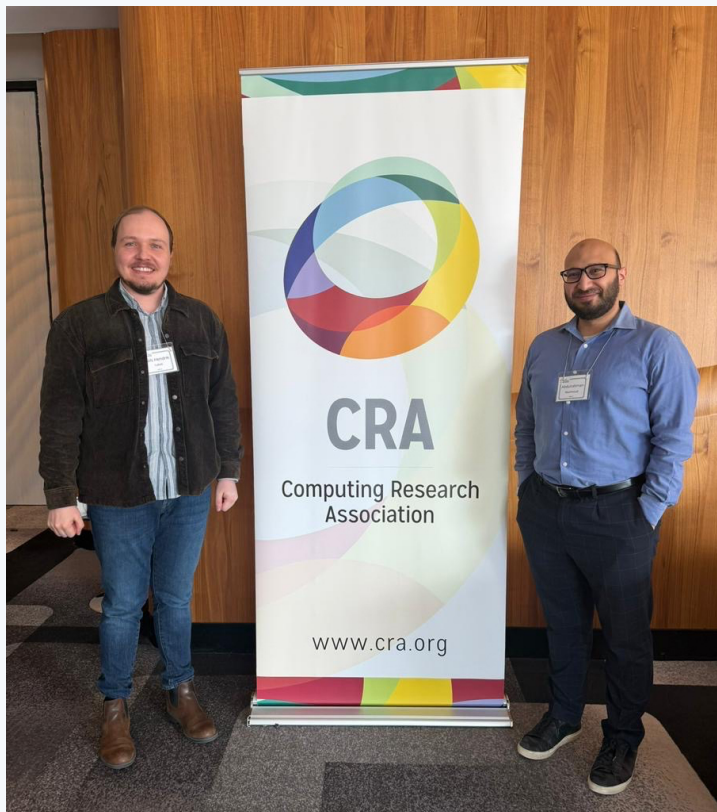
More information: [Amazon Research Awards issues Spring 2026 call for proposals - Amazon Science](#)

OFEA in action

CRA mentorship: insights session

OFEA hosted a virtual faculty session focused on insights from the recent CRA engagement.

Faculty contributors [Nils Lukas](#) and [Abdulrahman Mahmoud](#) shared reflections on mentorship, career development, and navigating early academic milestones, followed by open discussion with attendees.



Upcoming events

Faculty wellness sessions

We are pleased to introduce a new series of faculty wellness sessions designed to support your overall well-being and provide practical strategies for managing the demands of academic life.

These sessions will offer a range of topics – including stress management, mindfulness, work-life balance, and sustaining productivity – facilitated by experienced professionals in a supportive and collegial environment.

We recognize the important work you do every day, and this initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to fostering a healthy, balanced, and thriving academic community.

The first session will take place online **this Tuesday, 31 March 2026**, and will focus on supporting faculty both in-country and remotely in light of the current circumstances. A Zoom link will be shared shortly in the form of a calendar invite to all faculty.

Further session details and registration information will follow.

We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity and participate as your schedule allows.

RAIS Postdoctoral Fellowship – information sessions

Faculty are invited to spread the word on the upcoming information sessions for the **Ruwad AI Scholars (RAIS) Postdoctoral Fellowship**, a fully funded two-year program supporting UAE national researchers across disciplines to integrate AI into their work.

Upcoming sessions:

Tuesday, 31 March 2026 | 6 p.m.

Thursday, 2 April 2026 | 5 p.m.

The sessions will provide an overview of the program, eligibility, application process, and fellowship structure.

To learn more, please contact: RAIS@mbzuai.ac.ae

The OFEA team

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[Bio](#)

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Looking ahead

Faculty are always welcome to share ideas, suggestions, or questions by reaching out to any member of the OFEA team or by contacting

OFEA@mbzuai.ac.ae.



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