

GCEC Award Nomination

for

## **Yazamut 360°**

The Entrepreneurship Center of  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Award Category

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### **Outstanding Student Engagement and Leadership**

for a university with more than 5,000 students

Contact

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## Yazamut 360°: Entrepreneurship All Around

Yazamut (in Hebrew, “Entrepreneurship”) 360° was established in 2018 to help fulfill the mandate of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) to advance Israel’s geographic and socio-economic southern periphery. To achieve this ambitious mission, it set itself an equally ambitious goal: use entrepreneurship to empower students, in every field and from every community. By building a culture of responsibility, teaching leadership skills, emphasizing real-world experience, and connecting entrepreneurship to a diverse array of disciplines, Yazamut 360° indeed succeeds in granting BGU students an edge in the dynamic job market. But more important, it grants them a foundation from which to address their state and society’s challenges effectively.

### 1. Discuss the various programs or initiatives your center supports to engage a broad spectrum of students to achieve the center’s goals.

Yazamut 360° directs five different programs, each of which is aimed at a different subset of students. In this way, we can first engage and then empower the broadest swath of students possible at every stage of the entrepreneurial journey.

1. **LEADERS (Leadership, Entrepreneurship, and Academic Development):** a year-long, highly selective course for academic credit, [LEADERS](#) offers a cohort of 30 outstanding undergraduates from every faculty and a wide array of disciplines both knowledge of and experience in the process of launching a startup. In addition, through workshops, mentorship, guest lectures, and cutting-edge technology, LEADERS invests in participants’ personal development, imparting skills in building teams, communicating ideas, and connecting the dots required to succeed in any new enterprise. This year’s cohort—selected from among 200 applicants—featured 60 percent men and 40 percent women; next year, we plan to achieve 50-50 representation.
2. **Cactus Capital:** An entirely student-run venture fund, [Cactus Capital](#) offers any BGU student with big dreams but limited resources the opportunity to launch a startup or social project while pursuing a degree. The result of an unprecedented decision by BGU management to invest \$1 million in student entrepreneurship, Cactus Capital’s student leaders have selected, from among more than 350 applicants, 28 different student startups to receive between \$5,000 to \$20,000 in seed funding. In addition, startup founders benefit from the mentorship of some of Israel’s most talented VC and startups founders, including BVP, Entrée Capital, and Riskified, as well as legal consulting, skills-based workshops, networking, and workspace. Finally, to ensure that Cactus Capital is and remains a purely “of the students, by the students, for the students” program, we founded Cactus Academy to teach students to become venture partners and analysts. We then offer alumni a year’s internship at Cactus Capital, during which they do due diligence, nominate student entrepreneurs to the investment committee, and vote on the Cactus Capital startups that will receive funding.
3. **Oazis:** A venture builder and accelerator founded together with IBM Alpha Zone, [Oazis](#) first identifies BGU researchers’ technologies that hold the potential to solve significant scientific and engineering challenges, then matches their graduate students with industry entrepreneurs to establish a startup. Alongside skills-building workshops and mentorship, Oazis trains motivated undergraduates to head up the BizDev efforts. To date, Oazis has established 12 ventures, which have raised \$7 million in pre-seed funding, provided nearly 20 graduate students a year the right of first offer in a startup, and 10 undergraduates each year an invaluable career-building opportunity.

4. **Negev Prime:** Designed for individuals with no technological training, the [e-commerce accelerator](#)—funded by Israel’s largest bank and one of its leading asset-management companies—combines practical experience in identifying lucrative products, vendor negotiation, global logistics and regulations, quality control, cash-flow management, marketing, and more with industry mentorships to enable 25 students to open their own business on Amazon. This year’s cohort—selected from more than 300 applicants—featured 60 percent men and 40 percent women; next year, we plan to achieve 50-50 representation.
5. **Communities:** Our nine student-led entrepreneurship clubs offer all BGU students the chance to develop their entrepreneurial potential, gain academic and professional guidance, and network with other entrepreneurial students in areas that interest them. Currently more than 6,000 BGU students—a full 30 percent of the student body—are involved in a club, several of which have gone on to become national student and alumni networks.

## 2. Describe how you empower students to lead or own the efforts described above.

Our strategy for empowering student leadership is based on five, interrelated elements:

1. **Responsibility:** While our center’s staff and team of mentors assist at every step on students’ path to venture creation, students know that the initiative, the work, the risk, and the accountability are theirs alone. This approach is most prominent in the case of Cactus Capital, our student-run venture fund: By enabling students themselves to select student startups for investment, we use responsibility as a means of growth and empowerment.
  2. **Education:** A key component of all our programs, and especially of LEADERS, is an emphasis on teaching leadership skills, including the ability to adapt to changing realities, embrace new technologies, and nurture strengths in others and oneself. Formally, these skills are the subjects of our workshops, while informally they are addressed by our team of mentors.
  3. **Experience:** More workshops than academic courses, the majority of our programs feature a practical element, namely establishing startups or online businesses as part of the curriculum. Through Cactus Capital, Oasis, and Negev Prime, we bring entrepreneurship out of the theoretical and into the practical realm to ensure that students invest in the venture-building process and own the results.
  4. **Multi-Disciplinarity:** In keeping with Yazamut 360°’s mission, our programs focus on integrating entrepreneurship into all disciplines and encouraging students to use their own interests, identities, and experiences as the basis for an entrepreneurial community. In the case of Oasis, we connect researchers and their graduate students with entrepreneurs in fields from Agri-tech and pharma to cyber and wellness, while among our nine entrepreneurship clubs are interests in neuroscience, formula racing, biotech, and social action, as well as a community for aspiring female entrepreneurs from every field.
  5. **Message from Management:** Cactus Capital was launched in 2018 with \$1 million; this year, BGU President Daniel Chamowitz committed another \$1 million of the University’s funds to the program. This decision—along with the relocation of the Yazamut 360° building to the very center of campus, next to the student center—sends a message to students that entrepreneurship is valued by the University, as are student initiatives and ideas.
- ### 3. Highlight one or two specific efforts that demonstrate leadership in your center, specifically those that would not have happened without student leadership.

**From student to investor:** Cactus Academy is a semester-long course that trains 30 exceptional undergraduates to identify investment opportunities and evaluate early-stage companies. The curriculum includes a comprehensive introduction to technological entrepreneurship, VC, and analysis, and combines workshops with lectures from industry leaders. Upon completion, alumni such as Tomer Gofman go on to serve as analysts and mentors for the University's student-run VC fund. Thanks to their business acumen, Cactus Capital today boasts one exit, one startup in the final stages of a \$1 million term sheet, five startups accepted to leading global accelerators, over \$3 million raised in government funding, and four proofs of concept with corporations and municipalities. And Gofman, who today works as part of the core Cactus Capital team, graduated college with an unheard-of "deal flow manager at VC fund" on his CV.

**From student club to national network:** When female undergrad Keren Hod approached Yazamut 360° to express her frustration that women "don't see themselves as entrepreneurs," the last thing she expected was for Head of Entrepreneurship Dana Gavish-Fridman to challenge her to establish a student community. Along with providing her with a project manager, Yazamut 360° coached her on how to interview for team positions, develop content, and market activities. From its initial handful of BGU female students, WE ("Women Entrepreneurs") has today grown into a national network of campus communities that seek to spark women's entrepreneurial potential and grant them practical skills in launching a startup. For her leadership in the realm of female entrepreneurship, Hod was selected as one of [Forbes Israel's "30 Under 30" this year](#).

#### **4. What metrics do you use to measure success and to benchmark your efforts?**

The most obvious measure of our success is the inclusion, for the first time, of BGU in PitchBook's top 50-ranked undergraduate programs worldwide in the production of VC-backed entrepreneurs. Another is the growing demand for our programs, which require us to open new cohorts. Others include:

1. **The creation of successful startups.** In our first two years alone, we've helped launch almost 35 startups, nearly all of which continue to grow and many of which have provided BGU students with lucrative job opportunities.
2. **Investment by and collaborations with partners in government, the nonprofit sector, and industry.** On account of the extraordinary success of our student-run VC fund Cactus Capital, three leading Jewish foundations funded expanding the program to include a startup accelerator in collaboration with alumni of the Israel Defense Forces' elite intelligence unit. In addition, as part of their mission to advance Israel's southern periphery, the nonprofit Negev19, Bank Hapoalim, and the Mack Ness Fund funded the expansion of Negev Prime to include 25 entrepreneurs from the Negev community.
3. **Our status as a center of excellence for other Israeli universities.** Yazamut 360° is approached by Israeli universities seeking to replicate our success. Dana Gavish-Fridman frequently advises colleagues on how to develop student leaders through entrepreneurial activities.
4. **The active involvement of center alumni.** Graduates of our programs who have become successful startup founders and players in their industries consistently offer their services as program mentors and guest lecturers.

Finally, to benchmark these efforts over time and against co-curricular activities, we ask all students who participate in a Yazamut 360° program to fill in evaluations upon completion of the course. Students are also asked by the University at the end of each year to rate various aspects of their academic experience; unsurprisingly, Yazamut 360° consistently earns enthusiastic marks.

## Appendix A: Growing a Culture of Entrepreneurship in the Desert

Article published in Ynet, October 30, 2019.

### Ben-Gurion University Grows Entrepreneurs

*Out of 60 proposals received, investment agreements have been signed with nine startups; each one received \$20,000 and also business and marketing mentoring, along with additional focus on the startup category*

Technology to prevent drowning, a project to quickly find defibrillators to save lives, and a system that helps lecturers check exams; Ben-Gurion University of the Negev decided to invest in student startups, and for that purpose a venture capital fund totaling \$1 million was established, whose managers are also students.

“We are at the perfect stage in life to develop young startups, without commitments, and not afraid to dream big.” Many students dream of creating a startup and rushing to an exit. But in the meantime, in the absence of a prince with a lot of money who will bestow the golden kiss and the dream becomes reality, there’s no choice, but to focus on the daily grind—studies, work, exams, rent and employment. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev decided to help these students.

As such, last year, Roy Kimchi (29) and Danielle Hardonag (25) undergraduate students at the University received an offer that was hard to refuse: To manage a VC fund totaling \$1 million which will finance student or recent graduate startups and help them to realize their successful ideas.



*Danielle Hardonag and Roy Kimchi, managers of a \$1 million venture capital fund for student and recent graduate startups (Photo: Chaim Horenstein)*

The fund, Cactus Capital, was established in October 2018 by BGU's Entrepreneurship Center Yazamut 360° in collaboration with BGN Technologies, BGU's tech transfer company, and fresh.fund, which specializes in investments in startups by students or new graduates. Kimchi manages the fund while Hardonag is the operations manager.

Alongside the two of them, there are another 25 students who took part in a course to train analysts and are trained to act as scouts—always on the lookout for ideas. They find potential startups and ideas for investment and decide together with the fund manager in which to invest.

Presently, the first round of investments has been completed. Out of 60 proposals received, investment agreements have been signed with nine startups. Each one received \$20,000 and also business and marketing mentoring, along with additional focus on the startup category.



*First graduating class of Cactus Capital analysts, 2019 (Photo: Dani Machlis)*

**“It’s not every student who gets the opportunity to establish from the ground up and manage a fund of \$1 million to invest in students’ creative ideas during his undergraduate degree,”** says Kimchi, who finished his bachelor’s degree in Industrial Engineering and Management this year and is now starting a master’s degree in data science.

“As a student entrepreneur at the University, you have an advantage, because not only do you have contact with the best researchers in Israel, but the most important thing for an entrepreneur: talented partners in the building next door. And we are just starting out.”

Danielle Hardonag is currently in her third year of an undergraduate degree in economics and business management. She says: “People were surprised at the University’s decision to give \$1 million to students so that they can invest in other students, but when you think about the big “unicorns” (a nickname for startups that have reached a worth of a billion dollars and upwards that haven’t issued shares or been sold) like Facebook and Google, you discover that they started somewhere out there on a campus lawn. Students are at the perfect stage in their lives to develop a startup—we are young, usually without a lot of commitments, and we are not afraid to dream big. If it works throughout the world, there is no reason why it shouldn’t work here at BGU.”

Dana Gavish, head of Yazamut 360 said: “Because we wanted the fund to speak directly with the students, it was clear that we would choose a student to manage it. We chose Roy Kimchi, who had already headed the Faculty of Engineering’s Entrepreneur Club and was connected to the field.

It was important for us to create a new atmosphere on campus, that says: Students who have ideas for new initiatives can realize them during their studies. Cactus Capital is part of a whole web of new activities led by me and Center Chairman Prof. Carmel Sofer to support and encourage technological, social, and electronic trading initiatives. As such, the course assignments become part of a larger mission: Creating new initiatives which will contribute to the development of the Negev.”

They looked for a name for the fund and Kimchi explains the name they chose: “Cactus symbolizes a strong power which stands courageously against the forces of nature with little resources—just like the students. At the same time, we dealt with the branding of the fund, making contacts, and making decisions about systems and methodologies, I found myself using a lot of knowledge I had gained during my studies. Dana (Gavish) connected us with fresh.fund that brought a lot of experience and were essential partners during our establishment process. This is where we launched our first year from.”



*Yitzhak Shamia, pitching to the Cactus Capital investment committee. (He got the investment! You can now google Deltika and even book a demo.) (Photo: Dani Machlis)*

To reach as many students as possible, Cactus uses social media, sets up events focusing on entrepreneurship and technology and in creating a large and active community on campus.

After sending out a call for ideas and proposals come in, they are closely examined. “We try to meet with as many entrepreneurs as possible, we're also students and know ourselves how important this interaction is. Students invest a lot of time in sending their proposals, and it's important for us to have face-to-face meetings with them, to ask questions and to understand the idea in its entirety.”



*Adam Bismut and Jenia Golbstein, who developed a warning system for lifeguards (Photo: Chaim Horenstein)*

After the first filtering, a process with several steps begins which ends with a meeting with the investment committee, where, here too, most of the members are students.

One of the startups that were chosen is Deltika, established by Itzhak Shamia (28) while he was an undergraduate student in economics and psychology (he graduated this year). Deltika develops a dynamic model to identify the amount of risk for small businesses and their ability to repay their loans.

The algorithm allows banks and other bodies to give small businesses a more exact credit rating, and as such to give them better and fairer loans. “One of the most difficult things for us was to find someone who believed in our vision at the very beginning,” says Shamia. “Cactus gave us exactly the push we needed.”

Another startup is Sightbit, founded by Adam Bismut (30), who is in his second year of a master's degree in business management.

While enjoying a romantic evening with his girlfriend on a hot summer night at the beach in Tel Aviv, they heard about a drowning that had taken place on the same beach a week earlier.



*Ariel Hasidim, who developed an app to locate the nearest defibrillator in an emergency (Photo: Chaim Horenstein)*

“We sat and watched the lifeguard, and I said to my girlfriend that I don't understand why today, with such technological progress, there still aren't any tools that can help prevent drowning,” he says, “That's how the whole idea started and took off from there. We established the startup in 2018 with another three partners, Natanel Eliav, Jenia Golbstein and Minna Jacobson in order to use AI tools to prevent drowning.”

Using image recognition technology combined with machine learning, a system of cameras takes and analyzes pictures that offer lifeguards an up-to-date analysis of risk factors on the beach. The cameras map the beach-goers' locations, warns of potential drowning situations, changes in the ocean, and offers options for general crowd control and particularly children.

Bismut: “We are at the peak of development and there is a pilot in place in Ashkelon and talks with strategic clients in Israel and the US. Soon we hope to place our systems on dangerous beaches in Israel and the US, and to prove the ability of the system in the field.”

Ariel Hasidim (30), today a 4th year medical student at BGU founded “**Where's Defi?**,” an initiative to map defibrillators in public spaces. The app provides information on the exact places where they can be found and how to get there, in order to make them accessible to the general public and raise the chances of saving lives.

Hasidim says: “During the first aid course during my first year of medical school, one of the first things we learned was if someone collapses and has no pulse, the first thing to do is to call MADA (Magen David Adom) and to bring the nearest defibrillator. After you're told that, the first question is where is the nearest defibrillator? We discovered that there wasn't an answer, no one knew. There are a lot placed around public spaces, but no one knows where, not the government, not the municipalities and not the first response organizations. From here, the idea was born: Let's make a map, so that everyone can find them in time.”

The development began as part of a contest “Students Leading Innovation in the Public Sector,” a partnership between BGU and Google. “We later received a financing and development grant from the Chief Scientist at the Survey of Israel and we are currently excited to receive funding from Cactus.

“Where's Defi?” is the largest social platform mapping defibrillators in the world (and can be updated by anyone-TT). More than 1400 defibrillators from Dan to Eilat are mapped and are on the first response organizations' systems.”

For the full article: <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5616384,00.html>

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
جامعة بن-غوريون في النقب

**YAZAMUT**  
360°



BRAINSTORM BGU



Oren Shriki

Itay Harel

Or Nahmani

Yahel Golan

## BRAINSTORM BGU

Nir Cafri

Shira Reinhertz



# SUMMARY

Brainstorm BGU is about neurotech, community and innovation.

We founded the community December 2018, as a group of students and one PI from the Department of Cognitive and Brain Sciences. Since then we have launched a national community.

This year began with plans to have a summer hackathon and a grand opening of the NeuroHUB during the spring semester. Covid-19 changed our plans, so we pivoted to virtual events and focused on preparing more equipment for the NeuroHUB.

We also had an engaging social media activity which lasted for several weeks, with games and riddles.

## **This report details our second year of activity, and it has been wild.**

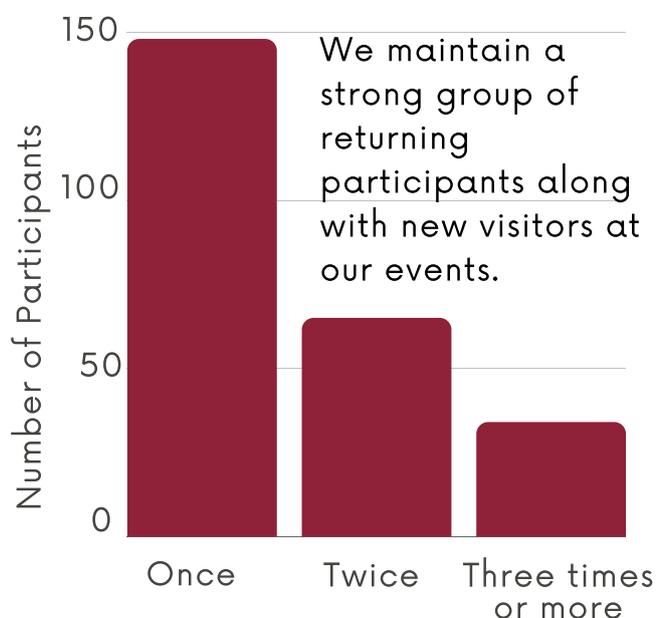
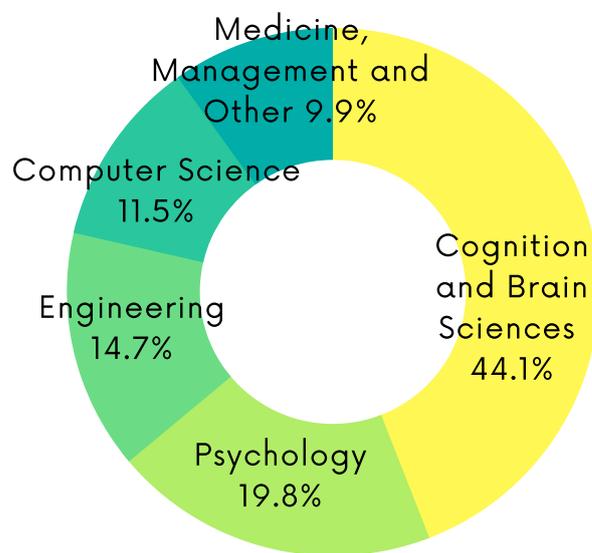
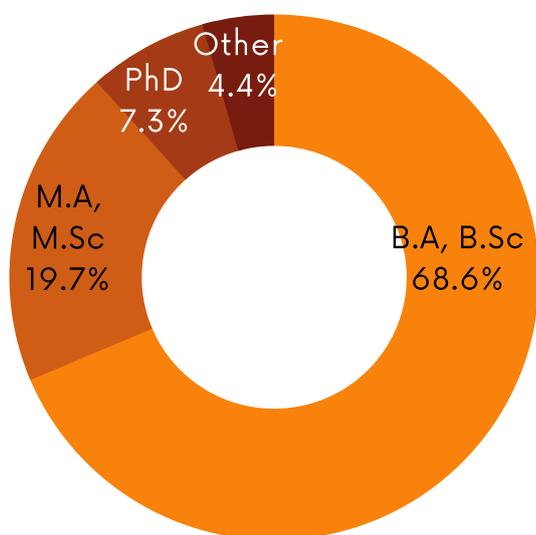
These are our main achievements this year:

- Team expansion while increasing our overall activity as well.
- Community growth in numbers and in other departments.
- NeuroHUB is now set up and ready for use by curious students.

**We invite you to see a bit of our activity.**

# COMMUNITY MEMBERS

We had remarkable community growth this year, in numbers of members and also in their different departments. Our team grew as well.



Participants not from Ben Gurion University were excluded from the analysis.

# LOCAL EVENTS

The major part of our community's activities are events with outstanding lectures and workshops.

8

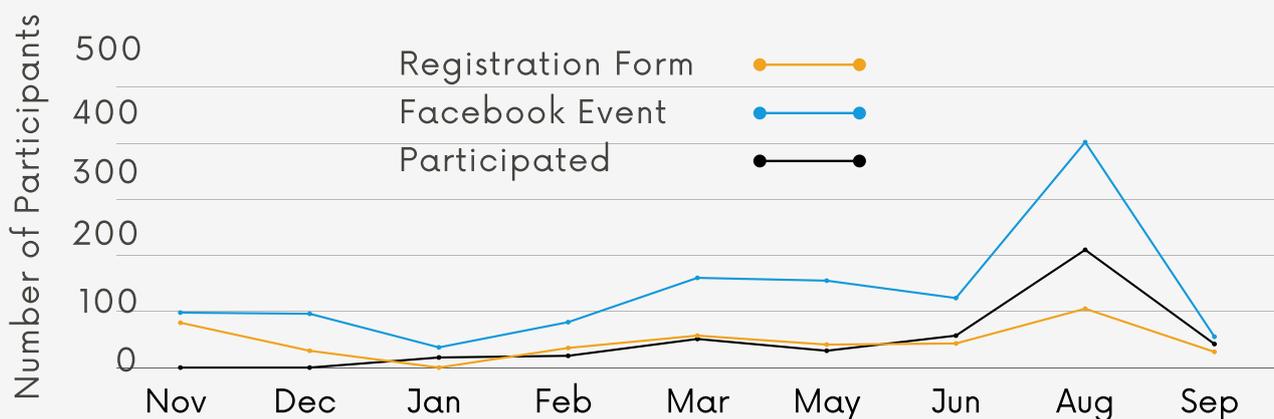
Events throughout the year, focusing on various topics

105

participants had arrived to the Data Science & Cognitive Psychology event

17

companies and organizations had representatives in our events



# NATIONAL EVENTS

We are proud to be the first Brainstorm community. Currently, Brainstorm IL consists of 8 communities 8 universities across Israel.



## POETRY BRAIN

+18%

Performances were from BGU in comparison with 3 other communities.

55%

of the articles in Brainstorm Magazine are written by BGU's community!

## LET'S CONNECT

+15%

Participation from BGU in comparison with 3 other communities.

Of course, the **winners** of the hackathon were from BGU.

## NEUROPICH 2025

+22%

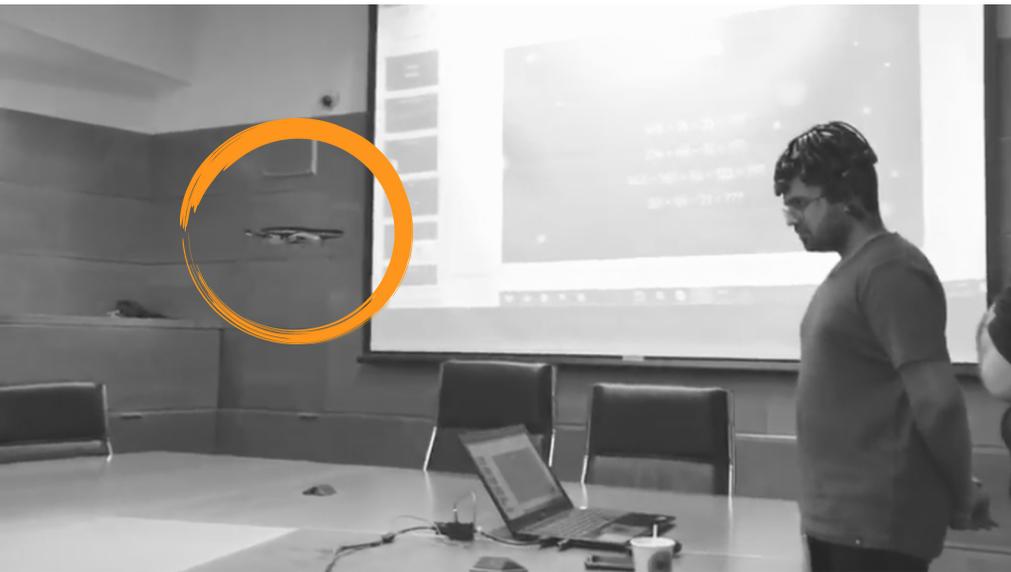
Participation from BGU in comparison with 5 other communities.

100%

Of the groups that made it to the finals, had members from BGU.

# OUR GOALS FOR THIS YEAR

We have big plans!



The drone (in the circle) is controlled by brain waves! When the person is concentrating the drone rises higher.

[Click to see the video.](#)

1

## GIVE BACK

We believe we have a role in the Be'er-Sheva ecosystem. Therefore, we are planning to initiate volunteering projects and to lead in the launching of the national BCI-4-ALS course.

2

## GROW AND GET STRONGER

We plan to accelerate the community growth while maintaining real and meaningful connections between the people in the community by working together, studying and having fun.

3

## MAKE NEUROTECH

We have (thanks to generous donors) a fully equipped NeuroHUB, and through challenges and hackathons we plan to create Neurotech prototypes.