

# MIT group calls CDPNE its top undergraduate

## Tarbzouni also named to Microsoft panel

*By Margot Rawlings*

Abdul Rahman Tarbzouni is a visionary with a resume that rivals professionals twice his age.

This sophomore at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) already has made two significant achievements this year. The first is the MIT-Arab Students Association (ASO) Undergraduate Student Award. The second is a seat on Microsoft's "Board of the Future."

A selection panel of MIT professors and industry leaders unanimously chose Tarbzouni for the MIT-ASO Award. "Abdul Rahman impressed the jury selection with his significant achievements at a very young age and the energy and drive that shows in his past and current endeavors," said Adel Belcaid, president of MIT-ASO.

"It is with heartfelt contentment that my work for my country is getting recognized,"

Tarbzouni says. "What matters is neither the pride nor the honor that accompanies the award, it's the recognition for the work itself and the passion that fuels it for a better future for my motherland."

He is also excited about the Microsoft appointment. "The Board of the Future is a very prestigious duty. We are official advisers to Microsoft," he said. The board comprises 12 people selected from around the world. Tarbzouni will be sitting alongside Microsoft's senior vice president for Research, Rick Rashid, and group vice president for Information Worker Business, Jeff Raikes, in a think tank designed to advise Microsoft on futuristic plans and visions.

All Tarbzouni's achievements are driven by his desire to return to the Kingdom and "bring back to life our lost heritage in the world of science and technology." He believes that to achieve that, the

Kingdom needs a pool of high-caliber Saudis who could encourage others to excel in science and technology.

To that end, Tarbzouni is also moving on one of his other initiatives, the Saudi Entrepreneurs and Technology Leaders Association (SETLA). SETLA aims to be a vehicle for promoting entrepreneurship and technical skills among Saudis. Top on its agenda is to replicate the "MIT \$50K" entrepreneurship competition in Saudi Arabia. That competition has awarded hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash and services to MIT student entrepreneurs whose business plans show promise of viability.

Recently, the Kauffman Center of Entrepreneurial Leadership said Tarbzouni's contribution to Saudi Arabia will help "transform the Kingdom from a predominately consumer-based society to one that is a vibrant contributor to global technology creation and



**Abdul Rahman Tarbzouni, left, poses with H.E. Dr. Mazyed Al-Mazyed, the Saudi Arabian cultural attache, who traveled from Washington, D.C., to Boston, Massachusetts, to attend the MIT awards ceremony. Tarbzouni was recognized by the MIT-Arab Students Association with its Undergraduate Student Award.**

scientific innovation."

Tarbzouni is pursuing a double bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and Management Science. He is a protege of Saudi Aramco's College Degree Program for Non-Employees.

"I owe my success to my family, especially the support

and encouragement of my mother," he said. "I started very young and have taken all opportunities to work alongside many people who have become lifelong mentors. I owe them much."

The next generation of Saudis may be saying the same about him.