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821 Ste-Croix, Montreal, QC H4L 3X9 Tel: 514.744.7500 Fax: 514.744.7505 info@vaniercollege.qc.ca www.vaniercollege.qc.ca

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Touchless computing – no longer the stuff of science fiction thanks to an award-winning Vanier College student

Imagine you're a neurosurgeon: you've started an operation, the patient's brain is exposed in front of you and you need to see details of the patient's 3D MRI on a computer. Forget about using a keyboard or a mouse; you're in a sterile field. Without touching anything, you just wave your hand in the air to change the image, enlarge an area, or move to the right or left. That's what's possible using *Touchless Computing* created by Rami Sayar, an award winning Vanier College science student. His innovation was recognized at the Canada Wide Science Fair held in Winnipeg on May 15, 2009, when he won a Silver Medal for *Touchless Computing*, a project he's been developing for the past year.

"My vision is to have smarter and ubiquitous computing where there is no need to sit down at a keyboard to start working," says Rami. "You could use a computer without physically touching it. You'd no longer be limited by what you could type into a computer. My last project was about virtual environments and I got fed up with a mouse and keyboard and decided to find a way to do what I wanted without them. I would love to walk into a room, wave my hand and start working without touching a keyboard." When he adds voice recognition, the next step in further developing his touchless computing, he'll be even closer to his dream.

All told, Rami's national awards included: a Silver Medal in Computing & Information Technology (Senior) and a \$700 bursary; a \$200 Petro-Canada Peer Innovation Award – Senior; and entrance scholarships from the Dalhousie University Faculty of Science, from UBC Science (Vancouver), the University of Ottawa, and the University of Western Ontario.

Previously, at the 31st Super Expo-sciences Bell, *Touchless Computing* was among the 100 best projects presented at the Provincial Science Fair in Trois Rivières on April 16 -19. There Rami won more prizes: the IEEE Éloi Ngandui Award – Computer Engineering, the Actuarial Foundation of Canada Award, and the Groupe des responsables en mathématiques au secondaire et l'Association Mathématique du Québec Award.

Rami Sayar's next stop is Tunisia in July for the MILSET International Science Fair. In the fall, it's McGill University. Although Rami had planned to study Medicine because his work has many medical applications, he's decided to study Computer Engineering instead. "I think Engineering gives me more of a chance to change the world and improve things."

Being at Vanier definitely helped him succeed with his projects: he had time to work on his ideas and his teachers were supportive and encouraging. Rami's advice for young people with big ideas is, "Don't get scared of taking on a big project. If you take it in small steps it's manageable. Remember that there's something bigger at the end and all the smaller pieces will fit together."