



## **For its 143<sup>rd</sup> anniversary, AUB embraces diversity and tolerance**

**Monday December 7, 2009**

Embracing and enhancing diversity on campus was the theme for this year's Founders Day ceremony, which was held on December 7 at Assembly Hall.

The ceremony, which marked the 143<sup>rd</sup> year since the University's founding in 1866, also proved to be an opportunity to promote a number of AUB's prominent scholars as well as announcing the winners of the student essay contest on tolerance and diversity.

Introducing the ceremony, AUB President Peter Dorman said, "Such occasions afford us an opportunity to both celebrate our history and reflect on our plans to build on this storied past and enhance our reputation as the premier destination for liberal education in the region."

He added that the University is committed to building a community that "thrives on collegial discourse, encourages freedom of thought and expression, and fosters tolerance." In order to promote diversity in the student body, the University will work on expanding international representation on campus and its financial aid program to attract a wide range of students, said Dorman.

Essay contest winner Zeina Koriem did not mince her words on diversity and tolerance on campus. "Exposure to ... different cultural and social experiences ... enriches a person, helps create a better awareness of the world, and encourages empathy for other people," said Koriem. "On campus, students seemed to naturally congregate into distinct groups, whether by their educational background, socio-economic conditions, religious beliefs, music taste, or political affiliations."

But fostering social tolerance for diversity enriches students and helps them contribute more to the betterment of the world, said Korietem. "Fostering social tolerance for diversity entails... [fostering] people who realize the strength of difference, their common aspirations, and who are aware that political choices and religious choices form only one part of their identity," she said, before concluding that the University has an institutional role to play in encouraging different social groups to mix.

Meanwhile Keynote Speaker Makhlef Haddadin, a former AUB dean and vice-president for academic affairs, paid tribute to 14 different scholars who were affiliated with AUB. "The unique nature of AUB is best demonstrated in its being a collective concern where the people of the United States of America and the people of the Middle East, especially this great tolerant host country, Lebanon, have been working effectively together for over 143 years to propagate this jewel of higher education, based in Beirut, with its fame spread over the entire Globe," he said.

Haddadin, a renowned chemist who co-discovered the Beirut Reaction—a chemical reaction that has helped develop hundreds of anti-bacterial and anti-cancerous drugs—highlighted the achievements in science, medicine, and the humanities of the following scholars who contributed to AUB's academic history: Dr. Cornelius Van Dyck, President Steven Penrose, El-Sheikh Nassif al-Yazighi, Professor Emeritus Kamal Salibi, Professor Khalil Hawi, Professor Emeritus Costas H. Issidorides, Professor Emeritus Edward (Ted) Kennedy, Professor Emeritus Abdul-Mun'im Talhouk, Professor John Batatu, Professor Emeritus George Fawaz, Professor Emeritus Sami Fuad Haddad, Professor Vasken Derkaloustain, and Professor Charles Abou Chaar.

The top three essay winners received \$750, \$500 and \$250 cash prizes.

In second place, Mohammad Abdallah Ramadan, a fifth year architecture student, won for his essay, "AUB Campus: A Tolerant Space."

Sophomore students Timmy Malkoun and Rita Harbie landed third prize for an essay in which they likened diversity on campus to tabbouleh, the Lebanese salad.

The winners' names will be inscribed on a plaque in the entrance of Assembly Hall.