

For Immediate Release



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The AUB alumni reunion 2022 event: **“back in person again!”**

The American University of Beirut (AUB) held its alumni reunion event over two days, an opportunity for the university and some of its former graduates to reconnect and celebrate. “Class reunions are always great occasions,” said Associate Vice President for Development, Alumni Relations and University Events Salma Oueida, “but Reunion 2022 was especially wonderful for all of us because it was our first in-person class reunion since 2019.”

The event kicked off with the Honoring Ceremony in Assembly Hall on June 23rd during which AUB honored the members of the Classes of 1972 and 1997 celebrating their 50th and 25th graduation anniversaries. The Class of 1971, which celebrated its 50th graduation anniversary in 2021, was also honored this year. “The Class of 1971 has been unlucky,” explained Oueida. “There was no commencement in 1971 because it was cancelled that year due to student protests on campus, no 25th anniversary celebration in 1996, and then we were not able to organize a class reunion last year, during which we would have celebrated its 50th anniversary, because of the pandemic. So, we are especially happy to honor the Class of 1971 during Reunion 2022.”

Hundreds of celebrating alumni and members of their families participated in the Honoring Ceremony, which was attended by President Fadlo R. Khuri. After a brief welcome from Oueida, Khuri addressed alumni and their families. He spoke about the recent Commencement exercises on the Green Field and the opening of AUB Mediterraneo in Pafos, Cyprus. He also spoke about the many important contributions that AUB alumni make to their alma mater. “There is no doubt about it. Our alumni’s contributions, their commitment, and their abiding loyalty, make AUB such a very special institution. You are our greatest ambassadors, provide the wisest counsel, are sometimes our fiercest critics, but are always our most steadfast friends.” said Khuri.

Three alumni speakers spoke on behalf of the celebrating classes: Mr. Jalal Bitar (BEN ’71), founder and owner of EBCO BITAR, for the Class of 1971; Dr. Nasser Saidi (BA ’72), president

of Nasser Saidi & Associates, for the Class of 1972; and Lebanon's Ambassador to Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein Rola Nouredine (BA '94, MBA '97), for the Class of 1997.

"I was starting to believe that I will never get to celebrate anything with my friends and classmates," said Bitar noting that there had been no commencement in 1971, no 25th anniversary celebration in 1996 because of the Grapes of Wrath War, and no 50th reunion in 2021 because of the pandemic. He urged his classmates to give themselves a "pat on the back." Bitar also gave AUB "a big thank you... not just for the education, but for the knowledge, the culture, the personality, the leadership skills... for every beautiful memory and every sad memory. I am sure we all had our share of both... but each and every one of those made us who we are today..." he said.

Speaking on behalf of the Class of 1972, Saidi described "our AUB" as "a melting pot, a microcosm of Ras Beirut, of nationalities, races, cultures, religions, sects, and communities that instilled in us the values of tolerance, of respect for different views, valuing the benefits of diversity, rejecting violence as a means of change and transformation." He spoke about "the scars of the wars, invasions, violence, and revolutions that have devastated our region without delivering the required reforms" that he and other members of his generation bear. "Despite the challenges," he continued, "we can be proud for unleashing the forces of vision, creativity, innovation and invention helping countries diversify away from dependence on natural resources and introducing new technologies to better lives."

Nouredine spoke about how the Honoring Ceremony was a chance to reflect "about our youth, and what it held in idealism, aspiration, and dreams for the future." She continued, "The years we spent at AUB sharpened our sense of politics: politics as a public good, building citizenship and the indispensability of dialogue and transparent discourse." Nouredine suggested that the members of the Class of 1996 could be "reformed idealists – realists. Keeping the dream alive is very Lebanese; it is our survival mechanism and our core strength. I believe that whenever our core value system and roots are put to the test, we realize that our commitment to them remains unwavering."

Everyone then headed to the Green Oval for the Alumni Party, which the Alumni Relations Office organized with members of the AUB African Club and Souk El Balad. There was music – really terrific music, lots of enticing things to eat, and activities for children. No one wanted to leave. For former club secretary Esther Kamugo (MA '21) and members of the African Club, the chance to help organize the party was a "golden opportunity." She says that her mother told her that when you are asked to serve a guest, you should "serve them with love, joy, and happiness." That's what they did.

There was lots to do on Friday as well. Some alumni signed up for half-hour tours of the AUB Museum. Others strolled around campus, some stopped by the University Libraries to check out “American University of Beirut: Lebanese roots with global footprints exhibit.”

The Green Oval was the place to be on Friday evening as Jihad Akl and his band took to the stage. “Jihad’s music is hauntingly beautiful – and also upbeat and positive. He does it all,” said Oueida. “He and his band were outstanding.” By the reaction of the crowd on Friday evening, it was clear that everyone shared Oueida’s opinion. (If you’re curious, there is a wonderful video that Jihad recorded on the AUB campus on the occasion of AUB E-Class Reunion 2020 that you can listen to here. It includes excerpts from some of the songs that Jihad and his band played on Friday evening.)

“Being back on this campus with former classmates, family, and friends touches peoples’ hearts. You can see the power of the connection that unites our alumni community and keeps them connected to their alma mater – even after many years. Reunion is special – for all of us,” said Oueida.

For the first time this year, the University Libraries Archives & Special Collections Department prepared “virtual exhibits” for the graduating classes celebrating their 50th and 25th graduation anniversaries. These exhibits feature photographs, posters, publications, etc. that are hyperlinked – either to larger versions of the images or to the original full text of the publication, all of which are available at the University Libraries. (Here are links to the Class Reunion 1971, Class Reunion 1972, and Class Reunion 1997 exhibits.)

ENDS

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 140 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 365-bed hospital.

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