

For Immediate Release



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AUB awards Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters to Ouided Bouchamaoui, Daniel Dennett, Mona Hanna-Attisha, Hanna Musa Nasir, and P. Roy Vagelos this June

President of the American University of Beirut (AUB) Dr. Fadlo Khuri announced today that five honorands will be awarded AUB's highest accolade, the Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, at AUB's 153rd graduate commencement on June 9, 2022. This marks AUB's return to its annual tradition of honoring scholars, innovators, and difference makers for their leadership and service across various human endeavors.

“Our honorands for this year are inspirational icons of courage, perseverance, and passion. They symbolize AUB’s unremitting dedication to its mission and values as they seek and express the truth and continue to harness knowledge for the betterment of the human condition, despite all challenges,” said Khuri.

Ouided Bouchamaoui is a leader for peace, visionary, and philanthropist who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015. She launched the Tunisian National Dialogue which resulted in a peaceable solution for Tunisia’s political crisis that followed the revolution in 2011. Shifting her country from a potential civil war to a pluralistic, transparent, and collaborative democracy, Bouchamaoui is known for her persistence, decisive contribution, and her historic and legendary role negotiating with various parties. She was named Best Businesswoman of the Arab World in 2013.

Daniel Dennett is a philosopher, cognitive scientist, and educator who has innovatively used science as the foundation for exploring the biggest philosophical concepts and questioning assumptions. Dennett is most famous for his foundational writings on consciousness and the nature of the human mind, but has made important contributions to the common understanding of religion, evolution, and artificial intelligence. He has blended the rigorous methods of traditional philosophy with the emerging fields of neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and evolutionary biology.

Mona Hanna-Attisha is an award-winning scientist, activist, and widely acclaimed author. She is known for her bravery, as she not only used science to prove that the children of Flint, Michigan were exposed to lead in their drinking water due to a human-made crisis; but also, at the risk to her own career, she faced a brutal backlash until the State of Michigan and President Barack Obama acknowledged her findings and solved the issue. She is a champion of children's health, an outspoken national advocate, and a global leader in the fight against environmental injustice.

Hanna Musa Nasir is an academic and political figure who directed the transition of Birzeit University from a community college to an accredited, world-class university while in exile from Palestine and in the face of much resistance. He became the university's first and long-time president and he fostered innovative teaching mechanisms to materialize his untiring vision to create a model refuge for Palestinian students to study in their homeland, in addition to several academic and administrative positions.

P. Roy Vagelos succeeded in many fields, from physician to biomedical scientist and business leader, and he translated scientific discoveries to the benefit of mankind. He changed the strategy for discovering drugs and, while propelling Merck & Co to global success, he convinced the pharmaceutical giant to give a vitally-important drug away for free, saving the sight of millions in the developing world. Vagelos serves as chairman of the board at Regeneron, a leading biotechnology firm working on innovative medicines, and he continues his widespread philanthropy and unwavering support for education.

“These five pioneers join AUB and exemplify our values through their assiduous commitment to the AUB mission, as they combine knowledge with innovation to contribute sustainable solutions for the betterment of mankind. We welcome our exceptional honorands as they deservedly take their places among AUB's list of inspirational leaders that have inhabited its historic campus,” Khuri concluded.

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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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