

For Immediate Release



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Workshop at AUB on “Experiences and Advances on University Transformation”

The American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS) hosted a two-day workshop on Experiences and Advances in University Transformation as part of the Kellogg funded project, Transforming Higher Education Project. Forty-eight participants from 30 academic institutions and international organizations in the United States, Canada, Latin America, Europe, Africa, and Asia participated in the workshop, shared their commitment to advances in higher educational transformation. Project partners also addressed issues around strengthening and scaling up transformation efforts globally in response to the challenges arising in the 21st century.

AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri welcomed the attendees and speakers, stating, “We are deeply committed to this project. We do this with great desire to learn from our partners.” FAFS Dean, Dr. Rabi Mohtar, spoke at and moderated the event following President Khuri’s opening remarks. The Dean addressed the importance of the changes under discussion as a tool for both instructors and students in becoming more eco-conscious in their decisions: an extremely important factor in mitigating current and future environmental challenges.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation president and CEO, La June Montgomery Tabron, spoke of the importance of creating and providing a stable environment for the students; an environment that allows students to achieve their full potential as leaders, noting that students must “take what they have learned ...back to their communities. These stable conditions come from families, communities, and building equality within our societies.”

Dr. Jose Zaglul, President Emeritus of EARTH University and AUB Trustee, stressed the importance of content taught, rather than the teaching itself. He noted that education is about two things: people who care about what they are experiencing and what they are teaching, and the

ability of students to apply what they learn to the real world to create a sense of experiential learning.

Dr. Ian Maw, former Vice President of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), addressed the importance of understanding and growing with diversity. Dr. Maw pointed out “with diversity come new challenges, requiring more personalized interventions and technological approaches to address the changing needs and goals of students.”

Following the opening session, Dr. Jim French, project director, presented an overview of the project and the advances made during its first year. Dr. French identified the pilot universities of the program, American University of Beirut, Université Quisqueya (Haiti), Technological Institutes of Calkiní, and Conkal (Mexico). He spoke of the partnership between AUB and the Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA), and shared the experiences as they embarked on this journey: the major challenges faced and anticipated and the advances made thus far.

Dr. John Kennelly, president of GCHERA, provided an overview of GCHERA and introduced the Global GCHERA network participants, who shared the innovative educational models and transformations that their respective universities are implementing or expecting to implement. They also explained the reasons, objectives, successes, and challenges associated with these innovations in changing their educational models. They also described their visions of the future profiles of their graduates and the way in which the transformation addresses the changing world for which these graduates will become the agents of change.

The second day of the workshop took place at AREC and included a panel discussion about ways in which on-going problem solving research can, and should, be an integral part of the undergraduate experience, and how it might contribute to solving 21st century challenges. A prominent question on everyone’s mind was “How does research contribute to the education of tomorrow’s leaders?”

Focusing on the agricultural side of the workshop, AREC director Dr. Mustapha Haidar presented the current activities and plans for AREC to become a hub of community engagement. Dr. Shady Hamadeh, director of the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU) presented ES DU’s on-going rural development projects and the Unit’s work with the community.

As a token of appreciation of the accomplishments to date and the hope for continued promising project outcomes in the coming year, each participating institution planted a tree at AREC. Participants then enjoyed community activities, including the Khiara cooperative’s community

kitchen and dairy unit, the Saghbine demo-plot for climate smart agriculture, and the fun and delicious food along the Darb el Karam trail.

The final day of the workshop provided the participants with opportunities to discuss global networking and partnerships on university transformation and concluded with a discussion of the future of transformation of higher education.

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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 9,100 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 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 420-bed hospital.

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