



**AMERICAN
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OF BEIRUT**

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Celebration of the Inaugural Opening Ceremony of the American University of Beirut – Mediterraneo in Pafos, Cyprus

The American University of Beirut (AUB) celebrated the inaugural opening ceremony of its new twin campus, the American University of Beirut – Mediterraneo (AUB Mediterraneo), in Pafos, Cyprus, on September 6, 2023. Commenting on the decision to establish AUB Mediterraneo, AUB President Fadlo R. Khuri, MD, said “By building a new state-of-the-art campus with three faculties initially allowing for more than 2,000 students within the next 10 to 12 years, we promote the interchange of students, faculty, and staff that deepens our ties throughout the eastern Mediterranean region.”

In his welcoming remarks, AUB Mediterraneo founding rector Wassim El Hajj said, “We are laying foundations here in Pafos, Cyprus upon which greatness will be built. And greatness will be built here, I have no doubt.” El Hajj also spoke about the symbolism of the opening ceremony, an occasion which AUB celebrates each year, and of the university mace that was carried by Chief Marshal Amy Zenger in the opening procession. “Our university mace is made of Cedar, a tree that is woven into the fabric of the history of Lebanon and the region, including Cyprus, and has been featured in every AUB logo since 1866. And this mace is made not from just any Cedar, but from a Cedar tree log on the AUB campus, which is more than 7700 years old, making it the largest known single piece of pre-historic *Cedrus libani* in existence.”

The ceremony at the Pafos Innovation Center on Neophytou Nicolaides was attended by the Honorable Athena Michaelidou, Minister of Education, Sport, and Youth in Cyprus; Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the American University of Beirut Philip S. Khoury; AUB President Fadlo R. Khuri; AUB Trustee Huda Y. Zoghbi; US Ambassador to

Cyprus Julie D. Fisher; Mayor of Pafos Phedonas Phedonos; ministers and members of parliament from Cyprus; Senior Vice President for Advancement and Business Development at AUB Imad B. Baalbaki; founding AUB Mediterraneo Deans Alain Daou (School of Business), Salah Sadek (Faculty of Engineering), and Malek Tabbal (Faculty of Arts and Sciences); and distinguished guests from Cyprus, Lebanon, and the United States.

Chairman of the AUB Board of Trustees Philip S. Khoury spoke about the values that define the American University of Beirut and that continue to resonate so strongly today. “Since our founding in 1866, AUB has served as a bastion of liberalism and free thought in a region where people have long faced conflict and tyranny,” he said.

In her remarks, Dr. Huda Y. Zoghbi, distinguished professor at the Baylor College of Medicine and AUB Board vice chair, academic affairs, noted AUB’s success “in teaching its students to think creatively and critically, to uphold our personal integrity and civic responsibility, and to become people who never stop learning, so that we may address the challenges we face at local, regional, and international levels.”

Phedonas Phedonos, the mayor of Pafos, Cyprus, described AUB Mediterraneo as “a precious stone.” He went on to say that it would “not be a precious stone that will adorn the heads of royals, but the minds and hearts of those seeking the gift of knowledge.”

The United States Ambassador to Cyprus, Julie D. Fisher, commended the university and its leadership “for making education accessible and available, and keeping it that way – even in times of war and strife.” She spoke about the sacrifice that Americans have made to further education and the impact of that sacrifice. “The opening of this campus is the embodiment of how that sacrifice and dedication has led to expansion, promise, opportunity, and brighter futures for students in the region – so ‘that they might have life in abundance’.”

Her Excellency, Dr. Athena Michaelidou, Minister of Education, Sport and Youth, described the opening of AUB Mediterraneo as “a significant event for our country and a testament to our commitment to academic excellence and cultural exchange.” She continued, “With the official opening of this distinct higher institution in Pafos, Cyprus, we’re opening new avenues for students seeking access to high-quality education.”

In his speech concluding the ceremony on September 6, AUB President Fadlo R. Khuri spoke about AUB’s determination to play a leading role in Lebanon, Cyprus, and the

region. “It is time to step forward, to lead by example, to dare to not only dream, but most determinedly to do,” he said.

The establishment of AUB Mediterraneo is part of the American University of Beirut’s strategic vision, VITAL 2030, which was approved by the Board of Trustees in June 2020 “to ensure AUB’s future success, relevance, and sustainability over the next decade and beyond.” The select group of students enrolling at AUB Mediterraneo in fall 2023 were chosen from more than 500 applicants from a broad and diverse group of countries including Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Cyprus, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Nigeria, Rwanda, Zambia, South Africa, Tanzania, Sudan, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgystan, Russia, and Thailand.

AUB Mediterraneo is offering five undergraduate programs and two master’s programs in the 2023-24 academic year as follows: philosophy, politics, and economics (BA); psychology (BS); computer science (BS); industrial engineering (BS); business administration–management (BBA); business analytics (MS); and engineering management (MS). The university plans to expand its academic programs and grow its student body to 2,000 within 10 years.

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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 800 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 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 365-bed hospital.

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