

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 30-8-2016

## **AUB welcomes 493 students from 58 countries**

The International Student Orientation Week concluded by welcoming to the American University of Beirut (AUB) a diverse group of 493 students from 58 countries worldwide. The Office of International Programs (OIP) at AUB organized a series of activities and orientation sessions to the group that included undergraduate and graduate degree seekers, exchange students, and visiting students interested in taking courses at AUB.

This fall, joining 825 continuing international students will be new students from: Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Libya, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela, Yemen, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Zambia.

“This year, in addition to countries that we often receive students from such as Denmark, Germany, France, Palestine and Syria, we have a particularly diverse student body with students coming from Afghanistan, Armenia, Benin, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, and Uganda,” said Director of OIP Hala Dimechkie. “OIP has developed orientation programs designed specifically for visiting and exchange students and for international students. Our aim is to welcome these students in the best way we can and equip them with all the support and the information that they need to begin the semester at AUB and to adapt to life in Lebanon.” She added.

Direct partnership agreements between institutions abroad and AUB resulted in an increasing number of AUB students studying abroad and the arrival of 27 new exchange students to AUB this fall. In addition, and for various reasons, including interest in research, the region, and the Arabic language, 37 students visiting from universities in Denmark, Germany, United Kingdom, USA, Switzerland, Sweden, Armenia, and Brazil decided to take courses at AUB for a semester. For a majority that has an interest in developing a deeper understanding of the context of the Middle East, the Arabic language, Middle East studies, political science, Media, and Journalism

are very popular topics. Other students seek AUB's publications and access to research in areas such as health, engineering, and the sciences.

"AUB has a good Anthropology program, I looked it up, I really liked the professors, and some of the publications that I have read out of the department were very good," said Natalie Wilkinson who joined AUB for a Master's degree in Anthropology after her BA from the University of Sussex, UK. "I wanted to be here. Some of my friends have studied Arabic here. My father studied here too!"

Harvard University student Andy is a visiting student at AUB. He is finishing his BA in International Relations and is looking forward to learning more about the country and improving his Arabic language skills. For Cory Price, coming from Maine, USA, AUB was the best place to study for his BA as he continues to work for Syrian refugees in Lebanon through an NGO. Learning Arabic was an added plus.

International degree seekers for the year 2015-16 composed 21% of the entire student body and were enrolled across the spectrum of faculties. Twenty-eight percent of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences student body is international, as is 22% of the Olayan School of Business, 21% of the Faculty of Health Sciences; 18% of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences; 16% of the Faculty of Medicine; 15% of the Hariri School of Nursing; and 14% of the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture.

OIP coordinates with over 12 universities in Europe through the Erasmus+ mobility scheme to develop agreements that offer mobility opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students as well as for staff and faculty. Li Berglund, a student at Södertörn University, Stockholm, is one of these students. Scholarships to study at AUB are also announced abroad and attract students such as Nour Ali, from Bahrain, who is starting her studies for a BA in Media Studies. "The opportunity came across when I learned from the America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST) about the US-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Scholarship. I applied, I was happy to be accepted and, here I am, looking forward to four years at AUB!"

Students were guided through an OIP Mentor Program whereby 18 trained mentors volunteered to help approximately 25 students each with settling in at AUB and in Lebanon as well as organizing events for international students. Upon receiving their acceptance letter, international students receive a letter from their mentor initiating contact. Trips to various places in Lebanon, social activities, and cultural events follow throughout the semester.

Dalal El Khatib and Elias Chahine are two volunteering mentors who have themselves come to AUB from Colombia and the US respectively. "It's a great experience to help others. I have been in their shoes and I didn't know anyone before I came here. Thanks to the program, we get to

know a lot of people and we start building friendships,” said Dalal. “As for me, I wanted to share the knowledge I gained about Lebanon and the Lebanese culture after I came here from the US. I want to make sure that the international students get a good experience and get the right impression of Lebanon,” said Elias.

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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 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 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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