

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 4-12-2018

AUB celebrates its 152nd Founders Day:

“Toward a new way forward in higher education”

The American University of Beirut (AUB) celebrated its 152nd Founders Day in its annual ceremony held at Assembly Hall in the presence of members of the Board of Trustees, AUB administration, faculty, students, and the AUB community. The celebration reiterated AUB’s commitment to the values instilled by its founders since December 3, 1866.

Although an old tradition of paying tribute to AUB’s founders; a ceremony of caps, gowns, processions, and singing the alma mater; and a pledge to the values that AUB stands for, the focus of this year’s Founders Day ceremony was on the way forward. The celebration of AUB’s 152nd anniversary of its founding, which launched this year an annual Giving Day, emphasized the importance of a kindled spirit of philanthropy to continue the legacy that AUB’s founders introduced, recognizing necessary shifts in higher education that better prepare it for present and future global changes and challenges.

“According to our tradition, it is a day when we honor the founders of our institution, from its small but visionary beginnings in 1866, and celebrate the generations of scholarship, transformative education, and service to communities that followed,” said AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri. “We are also beginning a new tradition this year, of holding an annual Giving Day on the same day as Founders Day, in order to reenergize new generations in the spirit of philanthropy which enabled this university to come to being.”

As with every year, AUB students were invited to participate in the Founders Day Student Essay Contest, this year about how AUB can educate tomorrow’s leaders today. Four students won the top three prizes. Dima Mehdi, majoring in political studies and public administration, won third prize. Winners of the second prize were Ubah Ali from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Claudette Igiraneza from the Faculty of Health Sciences.

First prize winner was Zine Labidine Ghebouli, a political studies and public administration major in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the recipient of scholarship support from the Middle East Partnership Initiative – Tomorrow’s Leaders program. In his winning essay “AUB, an Institution of Today’s Leaders,” Ghebouli wrote about the opportunity AUB is offering him to live his dream of taking part with other youth in confidently leading his homeland, Algeria, towards a prosperous future, and how— through an inclusive educational system that engages students with policy makers—a generation can be formed of leaders who “speak for their region instead of having others speaking in their name.”

“AUB has always been the voice of the peoples of the Middle East,” he said. “Being one of the youth’s voices in the Middle East, AUB has the rightful duty to provide a fresh vision and to restore the trust between this region and the world ... This university has surely changed my life and I want it to change the lives of others; it has not given up on me during the hardest moments and I am certain it will not give up on this region.”

Founders Day speaker was Founding CEO at the Abdallah Al-Ghurair Foundation for Education Maysa Jalbout. In her speech entitled “Service to Humanity: The urgent need for universities to lead,” Jalbout highlighted the challenging position universities in the region are in today, given the expectations, responsibilities, regional circumstances, and the impacts of global technological changes they face.

“Universities face tougher times than ever. They are under scrutiny for everything. They are expected to reform more quickly than the societies they operate in,” said Jalbout. “[However], there has never been a more exciting time for universities to have a greater impact on the world. Our world needs it, today’s students demand it, and advances in science and technology help make it possible ... Sometimes, universities are best positioned to address the problems at their doorsteps. Perhaps no university knows that more than AUB.”

Jalbout called for building new types of funding models, partnerships, and big impact system-wide approaches that reverse counterproductive ones and further the sense of urgency and clarity of the purpose of serving humanity. She stressed three critical shifts that are needed in higher education and that can be brought about through those new approaches and partnerships: a shift towards investing in solving some of the most critical challenges of our time; towards increasing inclusion in student bodies regardless of status and financial ability; and towards preserving and reinforcing ethics and values amidst radical and inconceivable impacts of technological change.

“It will take an urgency and clarity of purpose, partnerships that incentivize a mentality of abundance, and strong moral leadership to drive big impact, system-wide changes,” said Jalbout. “I cannot think of a university in the Arab region better suited to take up these shifts than AUB.”

Just as AUB was a beacon of hope during my own childhood in Lebanon, its leadership in the service of humanity is needed today more than ever.”

ENDS

Text by Safa Safa
Senior Writer
Office of Communications
American University of Beirut

For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar
Director of News and Media Relations
Mobile: (+961) 3-427-024
Office: (+961) 1-374-374 ext: 2676
Email: sk158@aub.edu.lb

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.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:

Website: www.aub.edu.lb
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>
Twitter: http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon