

For Immediate Release



## **AUB awarded a four-year NIH grant to establish a new interfaculty capacity building program in non-communicable diseases**

Beirut, Lebanon- 12/02/2013 -The American University of Beirut (AUB) has been awarded a four-year \$863,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to establish a new interdisciplinary program, the Scholars in HeAlth Research Program (SHARP), which will offer a new certificate and a Master of Science (MS) in health research, specifically focusing on non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The grant will also support a range of “Train-The -Trainer” initiatives and will grant scholarships to 58 SHARP students.

Spearheaded by Dr. Ghada El-Hajj Fuleihan, principal investigator and program director, SHARP is an interfaculty collaborative effort involving co-investigators Dr. Robert Habib from the Faculty of Medicine (FM), Professor Abla Sibai from Health Sciences (FHS), Professor Nahla Hwalla from Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS), and Professor Huda Huijjer from the Hariri School of Nursing (HSON).

“Establishing SHARP is a landmark achievement in terms of the program novelty, and its successful funding in spite of the scarcity of NIH funds available for US institutions, in general, let alone to international institutions,” said Dr. Mohamed Sayegh, vice president for medical affairs and the Raja N. Khuri Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. “Indeed, AUB’s application competed successfully against several first-tier academic centers within the US and other international applications. The NIH granted 14 full awards of which only two were outside the US, AUB being one of them.”

Under the SHARP program, FM and FHS will administer a 12-14 credit summer certificate, open to graduates of health fields, as well as a 40-credit master’s degree. Credits earned for the SHARP summer certificate can also be counted towards other master’s degrees at FM, FHS, FAFS, or HSON. Both SHARP certificate and SHARP master program will equip participants with the skills to conduct clinical and epidemiological research in NCDs, the leading cause of mortality in the world. NCDs include diabetes, hypertension, asthma, osteoporosis, cardiovascular diseases and cancers.

In addition to seeding the SHARP program, the four-year grant will cover all expenses for “Train-The -Trainer” activities. These include courses/workshops to be attended, by a group of AUB faculty members, at Harvard University. The grant will also fully cover tuition fees and related costs for a select group of 58 post-graduate trainees or faculty members from FM, FHS, FAFS or HSON, to complete the SHARP summer certificate. From the 58 trainees, six scholars from the Faculty of Medicine will be covered by the grant to complete the SHARP master’s degree.

SHARP provides graduates with the required foundation to pursue a career in clinical and translational research, a successful model available in several top-tier academic institutions in the US, and among the first in the region. It will help create and sustain a cadre of highly trained researchers who will conduct patient and population-oriented studies on non-communicable diseases. It will also equip trainees with management and leadership skills needed to become “change agents” and lead research groups, academic departments, or other health care settings. Management and leadership courses will be offered in collaboration with faculty at the Olayan School of Business.

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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 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the 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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