

For Immediate Release



AUB establishes special award for environmental entrepreneurship, with the support of the Abillama family

Beirut, Lebanon- 07/06/2012 -The American University of Beirut has established a distinctive award to promote environmental entrepreneurship, thanks to a donation by the Abillama family.

Administered by the Nature Conservation Center at AUB, the Samir and Claude Abillama Eco-Entrepreneurship Award will be open to current AUB students and alumni who can develop marketable and sustainable novel technologies that will benefit local communities while safeguarding the environment.

The new award, which was announced during a private ceremony on June 7, 2013, is part of a larger donation by the Abillama family, which will allow NCC to hold an annual conference on environmental entrepreneurship in June of each year.

“This award exemplifies the role of entrepreneurship in nature conservation efforts and will encourage our students to keep on innovating and coming up with sustainable and economically viable environmental solutions,” said Najat Saliba, NCC director. “As nature continues to be a source of ideas, solutions and resources, it is really up to us to utilize it for our benefit while we safeguard its existence. The award also fulfills our mission of encouraging people ‘to become custodians of their environment.’”

Karim, Youssef, Raed and Maher Abillama wanted to honor their father, Samir, for his 80th birthday by donating toward environmental entrepreneurship, a topic dear to him. Samir Joseph Abillama is the president of Al-Amir Holding, a growing regional family enterprise active in a variety of sectors including the automotive, architecture and industrial design, real estate development and facility management sectors.

An architect by background, Samir Abillama is a born entrepreneur, who, along with his brother Nabil, turned the family business into a diversified and successful industrial and services group with a presence in the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

Creative by nature, his curiosity, culture, sense of community and responsibility inspired him to develop many interests that include art and nature.

“What distinguishes Samir is his desire to always help others around him, not only financially but by offering his personal time with dedication and passion,” said Youssef Abillama, his eldest son. “He has succeeded to pass on to us his entrepreneurial drive and his sense of service to the community.”

Together with his wife Claude's appreciation of detail and artistic beauty, the two have enriched each other's work and interests.

"Because entrepreneurship, nature and the sense of community service are so vivid and important to both Samir and Claude, and to my brothers , Youssef, Raed and Maher, we wanted to keep his spirit alive by creating this special award at AUB," said Samir's son Karim.

The Nature Conservation Center at AUB (NCC) was founded in 2002 by a group of men and women who believe that human beings are entrusted with nature both to enjoy and benefit from but also to conserve for future generations. By providing an open and academic platform for innovative research and development and building partnerships between academia and the private and public sectors, NCC has acted as a springboard for innovation, practical applications, and biodiversity conservation. It has also established many programs and activities that promote nature and biodiversity conservation.

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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 8,000 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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