

For Immediate Release



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AUB honors the Bassatne family in recognition of their donation by naming the "Baha and Walid Bassatne Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering"

Khuri: "It will enable concerned scientists to bring about a radical change"

The American University of Beirut (AUB) held a ceremony in honor of the Bassatne family, in recognition of their valuable donation and the naming of “the Baha and Walid Bassatne Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering”.

Held in the Bechtel Building on AUB campus, the ceremony began with the Lebanese National Anthem. Messrs. Baha and Walid Bassatne and members of their family were present in the ceremony, along with Mrs. Randa Berri, Mrs. Lama Salam, former Premiers Fouad Siniora and Najib Mikati, as well as Ministers Wael Abu Faour, Nuhad Machnouk, Gebran Bassil, Raymond Areiji and Rachid Derbas.

Also present were the president of the Lebanese Contractors’ Syndicate of Public Works and Buildings Maroun El-Helou, the head of the Lebanese Press Syndicate Awni Al-Kaaki and Taymour Walid Jumblatt, in addition to a number of ambassadors and members of the diplomatic and consular corps and former ministers, MPs and a large crowd of friends of the Bassatne family and AUB.

AUB President Fadlo R. Khuri, his wife Dr. Lamia Khuri, Interim Provost Dr. Mohammed Harajli, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture Dr. Makram Suidan, Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences Dr. Nahla Hwalla and Associate Vice President for

Development, Dr. Imad Baalbaki were also present, in addition to a large number of university professors and staff and media representatives.

First to speak was Dr. Samir Traboulsi who welcomed the guests: “We are celebrating tonight a remarkable leadership in philanthropy. They are the right persons to give support at the right time. It is the Bassatne's willingness to share their personal vision for excellence and their confidence in this University. Our presence here tonight affirms the purposes and the shared dedication to their strategic partnership for the educational and scholarly benefits in the chemical and petroleum engineering.”

Traboulsi then listed the four elements which he considered intrinsic to the personalities of Baha and Walid Bassatne: Philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, family ties and passion, all showing their attachment and devotion to AUB.

He concluded: “AUB remains the best destination for partnerships especially bearing in mind the Bassatne family's wealth of expertise and professionalism in the industry of chemical and petroleum engineering. It is truly a remarkable gift and an outstanding and permanent legacy”.

Dean Makram Suidan was next to speak. He lauded the donation saying that it will be a mainstay of the department, now named the Baha and Walid Bassatne Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering, thanks to the generous gift of the Bassatne family.

Dean Suidan then talked about the history of the faculty, the department, the professors, and the cutting-edge research, recalling the changes in the faculty since Adib Bassatne and Samir Traboulsi graduated from it in 1973 and how far FEA has progressed.

Dean Suidan said FEA now boasts of six departments and one graduate program, 2,380 undergraduate students, 240 MS students and more than 70 doctoral students.

AUB President Fadlo R. Khuri was next to speak: “Before thanking the Bassatne family” he said, “I would like to pay tribute to the Dean of FEA who crowns his career as a dean with this wonderful project. No doubt he is a special dean”.

The president thanked the Bassatne family and explained why this gift is important to AUB. He said AUB has been the leading academic institution in the Arab region during the past 150 years.

He added: “In the late Nineteenth Century, there were many views on how to develop universities, including the liberal view, which is why our university’s oldest faculties are the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Faculty of Medicine, preceding the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture which started in the 1950s”.

President Khuri added: “Maybe we are not the first in relation to enrollment-oriented charity, but we certainly are the first to give women a leading and pioneering role”.

The president said: “The idea of establishing this department in the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture comes with AUB’s 150th anniversary. The Faculty of Engineering and Architecture is the strongest AUB faculty in terms of graduating architects and experts in earthquakes, sustainable development, water resources, engineering, and also in the field of chemical and petroleum engineering”. He said that while the region is going through what is known as the Arab Spring, AUB launches its graduates to change the world for the better.

Khuri concluded: “Chemical and Petroleum Engineering provides numerous opportunities for sustainable development, and as you have noticed there are many new approaches in Saudi Arabia and Iran for the development of the sector, which is reflected in our duty as a university to fund and support these studies and programs and to strengthen our teachers and our students. For all that, I conclude by thanking the Bassatne family for their wonderful gift that we classify as a transformational gift that will enable a radical change, and that is part and parcel of our perennial academic objectives”

Baha Bassatne spoke in turn. He said: “I am very proud to stand before you tonight to celebrate my family’s new ties with this great academic institution celebrating its 150th anniversary. AUB

has been a pillar of education in the region since its founding. Much has changed in our world since then, but this establishment has safeguarded the future by empowering and strengthening its graduates with knowledge and wisdom”.

“Since my young age”, he added, “I was fascinated by the world of petroleum. I learned its thousand-year history”.

He went on to say: “Petroleum is still a mystery. Only chemical expertise can explain it, this is why they say “Petroleum and Chemical” are a happy marriage”.

Mr. Bassatne described how he and his brother founded the company, which became a global player in a little more than a decade. He related the many ups and downs on its way. He added: “In the Middle East, education unfortunately has not been a main benefactor of oil wealth; nor has any institution developed a world-class department in the field of oil. To this day, either the majority of talent is imported or the students have to travel to all corners of the world to attain the knowledge needed in this field. Presently, Lebanon stands at a crossroad. We must help Lebanon in the area in which Lebanon needs help!! Recent findings of oil and gas present us with a vital opportunity to grow as a nation and become a key player on the global stage. Anyone who is willing and able to make an impact should”.

He added: “The Bassatne family is doing what it can in the private sector to promote the growth of Lebanon’s oil and gas industry, but the influence of AUB stretches far beyond that, for there is nothing more important to improve humanity than education, and that is why I stand here tonight. We want to enable the growth and ensure the strength of the department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering at AUB for the benefit of our future generations”.

He concluded: “Mr. President, as the AUB celebrates its 150th anniversary, it is both a privilege and an honor for my family to stand side-by-side with this great institution as we embark on this exciting endeavor, and elevate Lebanon’s oil and gas industry to the next frontier”.

The ceremony ended in style with everyone gathering for a souvenir photo and a reception”.

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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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