

For Immediate Release



AUB Faculty of Engineering joins forces with two ministries to provide public school student with hi-tech tools

Beirut, Lebanon- 16/05/2012 - Under the motto “Open Your Tomorrow”, the American University of Beirut Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, the ministries of telecommunications and education and higher education launched “The National Tablet Initiative for Youth” at Issam Fares Lecture Hall on May 15, 2012.

“Our aim is to make the latest hi-tech [tools] available to all Lebanese youth,” said Telecommunication Minister Nicholas Sehnaoui in front of a jam-packed auditorium full of public school students. “We want to give you the tools and the link so that you can connect to the world.”

Sehnaoui recounted how observing his own children dabbling with smartphones and tablets made him realize the new generation’s propensity for understanding and using technology in a manner totally different from his own, as well as their ability to mentally process things differently than the older generation.

“We want to reinvent the way children are taught and revamp the teaching curriculum,” said Minister of Education and Higher Education Hassan Diab. “We want to include the latest tools and technologies to keep our students up-to-date and in pace with the modern world.”

Sehnaoui explained that a public bid had been announced for 15,000 tablets, which will be partially subsidized by the Ministry of Telecommunications, the Central Bank and both mobile operators Alfa and mtc touch, to be sold at affordable prices to the youth. Some 1,500 will go to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, to kick start their pilot program in changing education delivery means and methods, which later would be generalized for all public schools.

“We want to go beyond traditional teaching and raise our standards,” explained Diab. “Already 15 public schools are set to be part of the pilot program after we receive the needed equipment. Our aim is to have all secondary public school students gain access to tablets by 2014.”

The tablets will have both WiFi and 3G capabilities, in-built safety measures similar to parental control and an added security layer allowing for blocking the device, in case it is stolen, and for tracking it down. They will be made available on a first come first served basis.

“We are favoring the 3G option as WiFi is still not available in all areas of Lebanon,” said Sehnaoui. “World Bank studies have shown that a 10% increase in mobile internet translates in a hike of 1% in gross GDP. The current youth market is estimated at half a million students, and exceeds one million if university students are included.”

“Information technology education and access will play a pivotal role in the future as we will be faced with technology in all aspects of our life,” explained Diab. “Its importance is equivalent to the reading and writing of the traditional system.”

The event closed with a raffle where winners from the attending students received various hi-tech internet-enabled cell phones and SIM cards offered by the two Lebanese mobile operators.

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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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