

For Immediate Release



## **President Dorman to students during Opening Ceremony: American educational model an unrecognized US foreign policy success in Arab world**

Beirut, Lebanon- 08/09/2014 - The American liberal arts educational model is still regarded as the gold standard in the Arab world, and may well be the tool that will help the region fight radicalism, promote pluralism, and produce enlightened and skilled individuals who will help develop the region, said AUB President Peter Dorman, during the Opening Ceremony, marking the official start of the academic year.

“In spite of the dismal foreign policy record of the last decade, American higher education is *still* regarded as the gold standard in the Arab world,” Dorman told a nearly packed Assembly Hall, on September 8, 2014, attended by students, staff, and a number of Board of Trustee members and faculty in academic regalia. “This is one unacknowledged American intervention in the Middle East that can be deemed a shining success.”

Indeed, American-style education does not only equip students with much-needed marketable skills, but also forms and elevates the human spirit.

While the humanistic values promoted via a liberal arts education produce a well-rounded individual who possesses coveted critical thinking skills and high levels of literacy, their more important impact lies in the formation of an enlightened human being who understands “the desires and aspirations shared by all humankind, the importance of respect for diverse beliefs, and the fundamental dignity owed to every individual,” added Dorman.

“It is this kind of an education that, we must hope and trust, prepares young men and women for the turbulent world through which we are passing,” he said.

This year, at least 1900 outstanding new students and 60 faculty members have joined AUB.

Dorman argued that the region will need homegrown courageous men and women who will create pluralistic communities in the “places where conflicts over nationalism, identity and citizenship are most pronounced.”

“These societies cannot be imposed or implanted from the West,” he noted. “The West is delegitimized by a colonialist past and burdened by an innate paternalism. These new societies must be constructed by indigenous populations of the Arab world, and they will reflect their own profound cultural, historical, and religious heritage.”

“If there are men and women to confront the “rough beast” ... to shift the ground of dialogue and understanding, to create inclusive nations out of the chaotic trends of the present, they

will be following in the tradition of Al-Mutanabbi and others who have understood, and been inspired by, fundamental humanistic values,” concluded Dorman. “We need more courageous men and women in and of the Middle East who understand the enormous challenge of finding a common ground in the regulation of human affairs. Fortunately, this is more than a fond wish: for almost 150 years, liberal arts universities in the region have been producing them—and notably AUB.”

ENDS

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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 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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