


LAU magazine

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& ALUMNI BULLETIN



#LifeNatureLearning



At the outset, empowering women was our purpose.

Today, it's our achievement.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Originally established as a college for women, LAU remains true to its roots of educating and supporting women in Lebanon and the Middle East. The university's Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, the first in the region, invests phenomenal effort through constant programs, lectures, and events oriented toward advocacy and the encouragement of women's participation in all aspects of society. Furthermore, LAU's gender equality policy is an uncompromising objective exemplified by the achievements of its female student body and the significant number of leadership roles held by women within the institution.

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Lebanese American University

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FEATURES

6 Nature in design



Nature is a generous and never ending source of inspiration for designers. It is itself the most creative, diverse and mysterious of designers, explored by scientists seeking to mimic its processes and power, and artists seeking to reflect its beauty. *Reem Maghribi* discovers how nature has been a fundamental and core source of inspiration for LAU students in various fields.

16 The sound of silence

Sound travels as a rapid variation of atmospheric pressure caused by a disturbance in the air. However, if these vibrations are too intense, over time the microscopic hairs in the inner ear can be damaged, bringing on hearing loss. *Gaja Pellegrini-Bettoli* looks into whether community noise problems in Lebanese urban areas could be negatively impacting residents.



26 The everlasting debate



Do genetic or environmental factors have a greater influence on your behavior? Do inherited traits or life experiences play a greater role in shaping your personality? The nature versus nurture debate is one of the oldest philosophical issues within psychology. So what exactly is it all about? *Federica Marsi* explores the idea that biological forces might be behind our actions.

36 Understanding human nature

What is it that makes us human, distinguishing us from other mammals? What drives us to do the things we do, making us who we are? Variations on this theme have been at the core of humankind's seemingly never-ending search for truth, influencing the most important directions in philosophy, art, literature and science across history and cultures. *Irina du Quenoy* debates the philosophical and theological side of these questions.



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Wherever You Go

LAU Magazine & Alumni Bulletin is your platform for sharing photos and news about yourself, your family and your friends. We encourage you to update us on your professional and personal activities and achievements — from wherever you are!



Help Tell Our History

We welcome news from alumni, friends, supporters and current and former faculty and staff members representing all of the university's current and former schools and colleges. Submit your stories and photos for inclusion in LAU's online and print publications.

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Front Cover

By Nour Daher, final year fashion design student



Back Cover

LAU Beirut and Byblos campuses

From the President's Desk

Dear Friends,

Technological progress, often seen as posing a threat to nature, in fact plays an important role in addressing that threat. Today, when environmental consciousness is at an all-time high, new ideas and technologies give us new ways of solving environmental problems.

As a guardian of society's values, LAU has a unique role, one that is both ethical and intellectual. The need for new and innovative approaches to environmental concerns increasingly shapes teaching and research in a variety of fields ranging from environmental economics to sustainability in architecture and engineering. We are developing a new center dedicated to fostering innovation across all disciplines and programs, we held our annual innovation challenge and during his visit the "father of the iPod," Tony Fadell, encouraged students to seek inspiration in their environment.

Indeed, the environment, and nature in general, have always served humanity as powerful sources of inspiration and continue to do so today at LAU. As they work on their final projects, our Fashion Design students incorporate natural shapes and colors into their creations. Our Department of Natural Sciences is conducting a study on the role of personality, as a construct of both genes and environment, on the control of diabetes.

Our Outreach and Civic Engagement unit continues to cultivate environmental activism. Students and faculty alike, in fields ranging from the humanities to the natural sciences, increasingly devote their attention and expertise to environmental causes.

To serve society, improve Lebanon's future, and safeguard the environment, our strategic plans include provisions aimed at greening both the campuses and the curriculum. Energy efficiency and the use of renewable materials now constitute a core consideration in every construction project our Facilities department undertakes. In addition to a minor in environmental science, we offer courses in environmental issues in management, physics, microbiology, impact assessment, and remediation.

One of the oldest arguments in the history of psychology is that of nature versus nurture. We know that they both play important roles in human development, but we are still exploring how they do so.

In this issue, we encourage the whole university community both to follow current research, and to look as well at the philosophical and theological aspects of human nature. But that's not all. We must not forget that nurturing and inspiring are engrained into LAU's culture, encouraging students to move forward and realize their potential.



Joseph G. Jabbara
President





LAU acquiring a Center for Innovation

By Naseem Ferdowsi

Philanthropist and
businessman Fouad
Makhzoumi donates \$3
million to establish a hub
for innovation

*"LAU thinks outside the
box in terms of traditional
education."*

—Fouad Makhzoumi, philanthropist
and businessman

Fouad Makhzoumi has pledged \$3 million to LAU in order to establish the Fouad Makhzoumi Center for Innovation.

"Innovation is missing in this country," pointed out the philanthropist and businessman. "You need business incubation and you need to get people to create a network for them in order to come up with those ideas. And this is where LAU, I believe, comes in."

"Since getting to know this institution, I instantly realized that it had a vision. This was, in large, due to my talks with its president, Joseph G. Jabbra," explained Makhzoumi, speaking at the signing ceremony held on the Beirut campus in February.

The Fouad Makhzoumi Center for Innovation, set to launch during 2017, will focus on educational and training activities in the field of innovation, including regular international conferences, scholarly workshops, a lecture series and international research.

During the ceremony, Jabbra discussed the Makhzoumi family's dedication to serving society and improving Lebanon, drawing parallels between their strong values and the university's purpose.

"Fouad Makhzoumi didn't forget where he came from. His philanthropic efforts, and that of his wife, serve underprivileged people by providing them with the opportunity to have health services, to

have micro lending opportunities and to have training opportunities in order to make a decent life and live with dignity. And this is why this gathering is very important, because that resonates very well with the mission of our institution," Jabbra declared to family and friends of the Makhzoumis who gathered together with university officials to celebrate the occasion.

Makhzoumi is a strong believer in and supporter of LAU, citing its innovative spirit in launching unique degree programs. "LAU thinks outside the box in terms of traditional education, setting up a fashion degree program and other similar initiatives. And we need to have such innovation. Innovation is what will procure a better future for our youth," he stressed.

Makhzoumi cofounded Future Pipe Industries and the Makhzoumi Foundation with his spouse, May. The Makhzoumis have a long history of giving back to LAU, with their first gift dating back to 2004. Their generosity has been allocated to different areas of the university, including the Gala Dinner Endowed Scholarship Fund, the School of Pharmacy, the President's Fund, and the Beirut Institute for Media & Arts Conference.

Igniting further innovation

By Naseem Ferdowsi

LAU gets on it and creates interdisciplinary initiatives

LAU alumnus and Emirates Computers CEO Hani Harik is the catalyst behind the university's ongoing Innovation Challenge. "Students need to venture beyond their books and experience the thrill of creating," he says.

The challenge, which runs from February 8 to May 22, is being hosted by the School of Engineering and calls for up to 15 multidisciplinary teams to develop solutions to real-life problems by exploring their ability to prototype designs using a variety of tools, including among others 3D printing, embedded systems and software development.

"We want students to experience the deep satisfaction and confidence boost they gain from turning ideas into reality even if there are hurdles along the way. Essentially, we want them to overcome the fear of failing because there is nothing worse than not trying," explains Harik, who graduated from LAU in 1985 with a degree in computer science. "We also want to encourage students to build and work in multidisciplinary teams as a simulation of what they will experience in their professional lives," he adds.



"LAU's comprehensive innovative initiative will ensure the university's long-term sustainability, well-being and leadership in the field of higher education."

—Roy Majdalani, LAU vice president of Human Resources and University Services

While the challenge is currently in its early stages, those involved say the projects look promising. "The quality and the number of submitted proposals proves that it will be tough for the oversight committee to select the top 15 projects to move to the next round," says LAU Associate Professor and Assistant Dean Barbar Akle.

Commenting on his dream to bring such an initiative to his alma mater, Harik points out, "Societies are not built on individualism. Just as I was helped, I help. And just as today's students are helped through this challenge, I hope that they

someday soon will help others." He adds, "Spreading and instilling this mentality to help others is key to building a tightly-knit, people-centric society."

With LAU's upcoming Strategic Plan centered around innovation, the university has embraced Harik's idea for the Innovation Challenge and encourages other alumni and supporters to get involved in various ways to benefit students and foster their innovation skills. "Inspiring themes and worthwhile projects are potential means to help us achieve our educational mission," says Nicole Barghoud, LAU director of development. "No doubt, this innovation competition will allow us to get closer to the needs of our students as well as build and maintain strong relationships with the community," she adds.

Indeed, the university continues to work toward offering students greater innovation related activities and educational opportunities, recently establishing a taskforce composed of several LAU VPs to specifically address this area. "The world is moving at a very fast pace. LAU's comprehensive innovative initiative will ensure the university's long-term sustainability, well-being and leadership in the field of higher education in Lebanon and the region," says Roy Majdalani, vice president of Human Resources and University Services at LAU and head of the innovation taskforce. "This innovation taskforce at LAU plays a role in this effort by examining resources within schools and at the university level that could further enhance opportunities for innovation, and ensure that student and faculty innovation is supported in the best manner possible," he explains.

At present, the university provides several innovation-related programs and activities every year. This includes an Innovation Camp in partnership with INJAZ Lebanon Initiative and Citibank, which seeks to develop students' time management, business planning and problem solving abilities among other entrepreneurial skills. The Shell Eco-marathon Workshop is another initiative that allows students to apply innovative ideas to the design, build and drive of energy-efficient vehicles.

On May 22, the Innovation Challenge participating teams will present their prototypes to industry experts and an academic jury for the chance to win substantial financial prizes.



Nature in Design

From buildings and bridges to materials and medicine, examining the design of nature has aided in the development of almost every aspect of our lives. For millions of years, people have also turned to nature for inspiration, as well as to help solve problems

By Reem Maghribi

FEATURE



Luke Brugger



Volker Schnabele

Nature is a generous and never-ending source of inspiration for designers. It is itself the most creative, diverse and mysterious of designers, explored by scientists seeking to mimic its processes and power, and artists seeking to reflect its beauty. Rarely, if ever, can nature be imitated to positive effect. And just as engineers inspired by birds did not try to build a plane using feathers, creative fashion designers do not simply craft skirts from grass or stitch flowers onto shirts.

"I draw inspiration from the curves, textures, volume, shape and colors in nature when designing my garments," says final year student of fashion design Nour Daher. "Colors are a particularly strong fixture in my work, as they are all natural and found in nature," adds the soon to be graduate, who eschews minimalism and prefers the bold and bulky prints of designers like Mary Katrantzou, at whose studio in London she interned last summer.

"As a child, I observed nature in its many forms," says Daher, the daughter of an agricultural engineer. "And during my foundation year at LAU, our instructors encouraged us to sit outdoors while sketching."

Just as natural spaces encourage inspiration and creativity in designers, so too do they in children. An appreciation for this relationship between nature and learning led to the development of a new

course for LAU students of architecture and education. "Topics in Architecture: Spaces for Education" explores how outdoor spaces can be materialized so as to function as an effective learning tool for children, explains Assistant Professor of Architecture Roula el Khoury, who co-teaches the course with Garene Kaloustian, assistant professor at the Department of Education.

"Designers need to limit themselves by setting criteria, because while animals design to survive, we design to facilitate."

—Gokhan Numanoglu, assistant professor at LAU's Department of Art & Design

"Our students have been working together to rethink the outdoor space of the nursery at LAU's Beirut campus, which serves as a lab for students of education," says el Khoury, who recently invited a horticulture specialist to give her students a guest talk about garden learning. "There are so many beneficial aspects to learning outdoors. Among other things, children develop a sense of texture and sound through this interaction with nature."

Reem Hilal, a fifth year student of architecture attending the course, concurs. She is part of a multi-disciplinary group of students working on developing a proposal for a sensorial garden at the nursery. "Natural substances engage our senses far more than synthetics. Wood and plants not only have texture, but also make sounds, release odors and have color. They tickle all our senses at once, which is why our strongest childhood memories are more often related to environments with a lot of nature," explains Hilal, whose group has decided to design a nursery with a lot of different plants. "Our surroundings shape us, so we must design them as a reflection of how we want to be shaped," she points out.

Landscape architect Bachar el Amine, a part-time instructor at LAU, is likewise a strong proponent of ensuring that space is designed to imbue social development and cohesiveness. While nature, he says, refers to the natural setting, which can be factually and indisputably defined, landscape is the projection of an area of nature that is projected by the designer or in the mind of those perceiving a space.

"We don't appreciate the impact of landscape enough in this region," emphasizes el Amine. "The way we design our environment — our ground — is not limited to a garden. It impacts how we define, organize and see our territory."

"Through interaction with nature — learning outdoors — children develop a sense of texture and sound."

—Roula el Khoury, LAU assistant professor of architecture

El Amine believes that the U.K. provides a positive example of how a country's landscape should be reconstructed post-conflict. "They engaged the people in the development of a collective vision to redesign their environment and therefore their society," he says, disappointed that Lebanon and other

countries in the region do not nurture such collective efforts. "Being engaged in my landscape is fundamental to my sense of belonging in and to a space that is an extension of myself," explains the Ph.D. candidate, who is researching the relationship between pan-Arabism and the physical environment.

Daher, the fashion student, is also intrigued by the impact of geography and nature on identity. "Different communities developed different styles of dress based on the geography and climate of the space they live in, and this becomes part of their visual culture," she points out. As part of her research, Daher looked through old family albums to see how people from different areas and different times dressed, their choices were not only affected by space but also by war. The resulting collection, titled *Relics*, will be among those worn on the catwalk at a fashion show to be hosted this June by the School of Architecture and Design. The event will showcase the work of students of the first graduating class of the B.A. in Fashion Design in collaboration with ELIE SAAB and the London College of Fashion.

Nour Daher





Christie Dawli

Among them is Christie Dawli, whose final year collection, named after the German word for “metamorphosis,” is inspired by the process of natural transformation. “My design was driven by a desire to deconstruct the unconscious,” says the designer, who holds a degree in psychology. “The process of reconstructing it thereafter led me to consider moths, which morph, and so I created a 3D printed fabric based on a microscopic image of their wings.”

One might consider war or skyscrapers when looking to portray destruction and construction, but nature, says Dawli, lets her creativity wander in a more organic way, which inevitably leads her to thoughts of nature and its creatures. “I find it less rigid and more breathable.”

Graphic designer Gokhan Numanoglu shares Dawli’s interest in animals. The assistant professor at the Department of Art & Design draws parallels between the instinctive way in which animals design and the way human beings approach design. “Birds make nests without being taught, ants build complex homes

“The way we design our environment impacts how we define, organize and see our territory.”

—Bachar el Amine, landscape architect and part-time LAU instructor

and bees make perfectly geometric honeycombs,” explains the designer by way of example.

Numanoglu is not sure whether human beings design through instinct or intuition, but he points out that while animals may design what they need to survive instinctively, they are directed by what is available to them in their environment. “Their restrictions influence their design. Similarly, we as designers need to limit ourselves by setting criteria, because while animals design to survive, we design to facilitate.”

Much of what we, as people, want to design and create is inspired by nature, as are the solutions we come up with.

Scientists are now looking to plants as they try to develop a solar fuel, just as engineers drew from fish while designing faster and safer cars and from birds while designing aircrafts. Man-made designs can never mimic nature—for it is too complex for us to truly understand, let alone emulate—but its role as a fundamental and core source of inspiration and knowledge is likely to continue for millennia to come. ■

LAU New York hosts the 12th International Conference on Wireless and Mobile Computing, Networking and Communications



Azzam Mourad LAU, Abderrahim Benslimane General Chair, Muriel Médard MIT & Peter Mueller General Chair

“Organizing this conference emphasizes LAU’s role in advancing technology on a global scale.”

—Azzam Mourad, LAU associate professor of Computer Science

LAU plays key role in advancing technology and research

By Paige Kollock

Ninety-three researchers, professors and graduate students from a cross section of disciplines participated in WiMob 2016, which is a forum for the exchange of knowledge between researchers, developers and practitioners of wireless and mobile technology. They came to LAU’s New York Headquarters and Academic Center from the U.S., as well as Canada, Switzerland, Italy, Japan, China, Korea and other countries.

“Organizing this conference illustrates LAU’s continuous contributions to research and emphasizes its key role among universities in advancing technology on a global scale,” says Azzam Mourad, LAU associate professor of Computer Science and general co-chair of the conference.

During WiMob 2016, Muriel Médard — MIT’s Cecil H. Green Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science — pointed out that although mobiles are equipped with 4G, users switch to a Wi-Fi connection when they don’t want to pay for data. “But it would make more sense if the user could get a little bit of juice from their 4G to boost the Wi-Fi and pay for only a small amount of data,” she explains.

That is exactly what Médard is working on — ways for those systems to complement one another. The keynote speaker’s research focuses on network coding and reliable communications, particularly for optical and wireless networks.

Samita Chakrabarti, the principal engineer and architect at Ericsson in San Jose, California, drew attention to the fact that “while there are many ‘smart cities’ around the world, there are still a few hurdles keeping us from being 100 percent connected.” Chakrabarti’s speech focused on the “Internet of things” (IOT), which is the internetworking of physical devices, vehicles, buildings, etc., with electronics such as software, sensors, actuators and network connectivity that enable the objects to collect and exchange data.



Azzam Mourad LAU Associate Professor of Computer Science

“Security and privacy are the two biggest concerns in the public mind,” says Chakrabarti. “If I am monitoring things inside my house remotely, over the Internet, the data must be secured and encrypted, and proper authentication of devices and user account info must be verified very cautiously. The same applies to healthcare data — privacy, data integrity and reliability of the information flow from the patient to the medical professional are all extremely crucial,” she adds.

WiMob conference co-chair Abderrahim Benslimane stressed the importance of such annual conferences and the affiliation with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). “The body of research has grown tremendously in the past decade and continues to grow every year, so we need this conference to share knowledge and keep up with the new research,” he explains.

Participants in the WiMob 2016 conference applied by submitting research papers. After a thorough peer review by experts in the field, 59 papers out of more than 200 submissions were accepted. They will be published in IEEE proceedings and IEEE Xplore Digital Library, which is accessible through the LAU Libraries system and to anyone who holds a membership.

IEEE, a professional organization headquartered in the U.S., is the world’s largest technical professional organization dedicated to advancing technology for the benefit of humanity.

Tony Fadell at LAU

By Reem Maghribi

Start local, says tech
entrepreneur

*"Don't learn and then
think you can do. Do and
then learn."*

—Tony Fadell, tech entrepreneur



During his recent visit to Lebanon, the "father of the iPod" Tony Fadell was looking to inspire and mentor youths while identifying potential investment opportunities. "I have an affinity to Lebanon," said the tech entrepreneur and investor, whose grandfather immigrated to the U.S. many decades ago. "I'm here because I was naturally curious due to my history, but no one gets a free pass. I'm looking to support unique concepts that are solution-oriented, humanistic and go beyond sales and marketing," he added.

Focusing on solutions before profit was among the many nuggets of wisdom Fadell, founder of Nest — the company that pioneered the "Internet of things" — shared with students at LAU during a special talk hosted by the university's President Joseph G. Jabbra. "He told us to concentrate on solving our own local issues and to not think about failure, but instead focus on preparedness. I liked that," said first year computer science student Maya Moussa after the talk.

Fadell enjoys mentoring young people and sharing insights with them from his thirty-year career. "It's an obligation, a duty, to be able to give back. I have unique experience from which they can learn and hopefully they want to. This is a craft like any other and you need to learn from others, from real experts who are doing it every day," said Fadell, who encouraged the students to work during their school years. "Don't learn and then think you can do. Do and then learn, so you can decide what you need to study and not to learn based on someone else's recipe."

Among the many LAU students to heed this advice is Rami Rikka, who has interned and worked for various clients

and agencies during his years as a student in the graphic design program from which he will be graduating this summer. Rikka attended the BDL Accelerate tech entrepreneurship conference in Beirut this fall, at which Fadell gave the opening speech. "It was a great opportunity to learn from and engage with other people," said Rikka, who was part of a team that worked together over 48 hours to produce the winning tech proposal and prototype at the conference's HealthTech Hackathon.

The prototype was of a mobile app that uses facial mapping and illustration to enable people with facial paralysis to do their daily exercises without being disheartened by the sight of their disability. Such an innovative use of technology to offer solutions in a humanistic way is at the heart of Fadell's approach and advice to all young people looking to work in the tech industry.

Lebanon has plenty of problems that present an opportunity for budding entrepreneurs to design human-centered solutions. "I would like to work on improving traffic flow and minimizing car accidents, as well as on solar energy and recycling to increase energy and decrease trash," says Rikka enthusiastically.

Despite Lebanon's weak infrastructure, there are, says Fadell, many opportunities. "A lot of Silicon Valley businesses simply won't come to this region. So, if you can exploit that and have deep technology then you have something great on your hands. You'll be building on a base in a different environment to have a core site of fundamental knowledge, which you can then take to other continents across the globe."



LAU student Rami Rikka (center) was part of a team that worked to produce the winning tech proposal and prototype at the BDL Accelerate HealthTech Hackathon



CELEBRATING TOGETHER

By Naseem Ferdowsi

A triumphant close to the Fulfilling the Promise fundraising campaign

LAU *Gala* 2016
Partnered for Excellence *dinner*





LAU held its fifth annual fundraising Gala Dinner at BIEL in December to celebrate the close of the university's \$100 million Fulfilling the Promise campaign. More than 700 guests were in attendance, including business leaders, politicians, philanthropists and community members, along with the university's faculty and staff.

"Each and every one of you made LAU a dream come true. A dream that has been marked by a great deal of excitement and marked by a greatness in serving the other, in serving each other, in serving society, in serving our beloved Lebanon," said LAU President Joseph G. Jabbara during his opening speech at the gala.

The theme of this year's event was celebratory and focused on the success and achievements of the university's second fundraising campaign. Notably, the drive for donations hit the campaign target one year ahead of schedule, raising a total of \$103,995,135 — just \$4,865 shy of hitting \$104 million.

This feat was made possible through 6,245 donations from 3,733 supporters,

including alumni, friends and corporations, among many others. These donations allow the university to stay devoted to the promise it made clear during the campaign: to remain committed to strengthening academics and becoming a world-class institution.

With an impressive \$55.6 million of the campaign monies going toward scholarship and financial aid programs, more needy and deserving students will be able to enroll at LAU. The sum of \$55.6 million is far above the \$11 million anticipated at the start of the campaign and demonstrates the university's commitment to supporting its students and ensuring they have the resources to pursue their studies. As a result, an unprecedented level of student financial support has been made available the past few years, benefitting hundreds of students.

All who visit the Beirut and Byblos campuses can easily see another major focus of the campaign. From the modern five-floor Wadad Sabbagh Khoury Student Center to the prestigiously accredited

"Each and every one of you made LAU a dream come true."

—LAU President Joseph G. Jabbara

Adnan Kassar School of Business to the iconic Gezairi Building, the university has quickly expanded in order to offer students the best educational experience possible. In total, \$32.9 million of the campaign funds raised went towards facilities expansion and improvement.

All proceeds from the gala ticket sales and sponsorships are destined for the Gala Dinner Endowed Scholarship Fund, which typically raises \$1 to \$2 million each year, and is one of the many ways the university helps its students receive an excellent education regardless of their economic standing.



Alumnus receives prestigious grant

By Irina du Quenoy

LAU professor committed to mentoring distinguished students



Samer Hanna at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine labs

“Overall, I have found that the students from LAU have had excellent training prior to coming to Einstein.”

—Dianne Cox, professor of anatomy & structural biology and of developmental & molecular biology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine

LAU alumnus and current fifth-year Ph.D. candidate at Albert Einstein College of Medicine Samer Hanna was awarded the National Cancer Institute (NCI) Predoctoral to Postdoctoral Fellow Transition Award. The new \$220,000 grant is aimed at encouraging and retaining outstanding graduate students — who have demonstrated potential and interest in careers as independent cancer researchers — and will cover the remainder of Hanna’s Ph.D. thesis research and four years of postdoctoral work.

“Only thirty students in the United States received this award this year from NCI,” points out Hanna’s mentor at LAU, Associate Professor of Cell Biology Mirvat el Sibai, who herself is a graduate of Einstein. “It will open doors and give him the choice of any postdoctoral position he wants.”

The quality of education received by LAU’s biology students has unsurprisingly received the attention of Einstein’s faculty. “Overall, I have found that the students from LAU have had excellent training prior to coming to Einstein,” says Hanna’s supervisor and Professor of Anatomy and Structural Biology and of Developmental Biology Dianne Cox. At the same time, “the main thing that distinguishes the students from LAU from other students at Einstein is their commitment to science and their faith and hard work even when things get tough.”

“The extensive research training I gained in el Sibai’s lab at LAU provided me with a real advantage throughout my Ph.D. work,” Hanna says. Among other things, the young scientist “gained elaborate expertise in basic cell biology and signaling techniques as well as extensive training in microscopy,” which he says he has heavily relied on throughout his Ph.D. work.

Cox’s colleague Dr. Jonathan Backer — the professor and chair of molecular pharmacology and professor of biochemistry at Einstein who served as el Sibai’s Ph.D. supervisor during her years in New York — concurs. “The students from LAU have been uniformly excellent, and easily compare with the best students from the States,” he says.

One of a number of LAU students that have joined Albert Einstein over the past few years on el Sibai’s recommendation, Hanna credits the training he received at LAU with preparing him for his current successful career path. His cutting-edge research involves studying the interaction



between breast cancer cells and a type of immune cell called macrophages, and the impact of this interaction on tumor cell invasion and metastasis — research that he began in el Sibai’s lab.

“This year I have two students who between them got four offers from labs at Einstein,” says el Sibai proudly. Since joining LAU in 2009 as an assistant professor, she has made the most of her connections with her alma mater, channeling her best students to pursue their doctoral degrees at the college’s internationally renowned laboratories in New York City.

“These achievements of our graduates testify to the world-class education that is given at our Biology program, in terms of knowledge as well as research competence, at both the undergraduate and master’s level,” explains Nashat Mansour, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and professor of computer science.

And increasingly, this competitive edge is achieving recognition at some of the world’s best institutions. “The majority of our M.S. alumni have been accepted at world class Ph.D. programs in both the U.S. and Europe,” stresses Roy Khalaf, LAU associate professor and chair of the Department of Natural Sciences.

As for Hanna, his receipt of the NCI fellowship has further cemented the informal relationship between LAU and Albert Einstein College of Medicine. “I’ve always wanted my students to have the same opportunities I had,” says el Sibai, who was featured on the website of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine as a decisive part of Hanna’s story. “I am honored that we now have a critical mass at Einstein, to the point where a lot of the faculty there called me [after news of the award] asking if I have any students that can join their labs.”

The new dean of the Chaghoury School of Medicine reflects on leadership in education, patient care and nurturing future physicians

Introducing Michel Mawad

By Reem Maghribi

Radiologist, neurologist and ophthalmologist Dr. Michel Mawad, who in February took on the task of ensuring LAU's medical students and residents receive the best in both theoretical and practical instruction, knows only too well the importance of a well rounded education. "Two of my three children are physicians and I realized, first hand, how important it is to provide doctors with a good education," he says.

Mawad will split his time between the Byblos campus (where the basic sciences are taught and the research arm of the medical school is located) and the LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital in Beirut, in order "to foster clinical practice, build a clinical enterprise, and be close to the students, residents and clinical faculty."

Proximity to and engagement with students, faculty and patients is a core component of Mawad's approach as dean. He believes that a good administrator is someone who has his finger on the pulse, and in that spirit, he will himself remain an active clinician.

"It is through being involved as a clinician that you become aware of the situation on the ground. You hear from patients and family about satisfaction and concerns, and from medical students, residents and fellows about their learning progress and needs," Mawad says. "It also enables me to attend to the faculty, who not only attend to patients, but also teach our students and residents."

The new dean's specialization is diagnostic neuroradiology and non-surgical radiology enabling the treatment of vascular problems — like aneurysms and stroke — in a minimally invasive way. He holds several patents, among them one on a retrievable shielded radiotherapy implant (1996) and the other on an apparatus for performing balloon angioplasty and stent deployment (2000).

"After completing medical school in Beirut in 1976, I left for New York to specialize," recalls Mawad. His wife, a pathologist, joined him there.

But for the war, they would have returned to Lebanon after their fellowships. Instead, Mawad remained in



"We have a fantastic school of medicine here."

—Dr. Michel Mawad, dean of LAU's
Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chaghoury
School of Medicine

the U.S. and pursued a clinical, academic and administrative career at Baylor School of Medicine (Texas), serving as chair of the department of radiology before leaving in 2014 to work on building a new stroke center at Abu Dhabi's Cleveland Clinic.

In addition to being a tenured professor at Baylor's departments of radiology, neurosurgery, neurology and ophthalmology, Mawad has published over three hundred journal articles, scientific papers and book chapters, hosted dozens of symposia, contributed to over a hundred research protocols and spoken at over one hundred thirty teaching seminars, in addition to directing the school's neuroradiology fellowship program. Teaching, explains Mawad, enabled him to continue learning and therefore become a better clinician. "If you are in teaching and academia, you always secure a good path of excellency for yourself."

He is delighted to be continuing his career as a clinician and educator at LAU. "We have a fantastic school of medicine here. The curriculum is unique, the basic science faculty is superb, the facilities are extremely good, the campus in Byblos is top notch — one of the best I've seen — and our body of students is very competitive," says the dean.





The Sound of Silence

The psychological, social and physical impact of noise pollution

By Gaja Pellegrini Bettoli

“Even in the most beautiful music, there are some silences, which are there so we can witness the importance of silence. Silence is more important than ever, as life today is full of noise. We speak a lot about environmental pollution but not enough about noise pollution.”

—Andrea Bocelli, Italian classical crossover tenor, recording artist and singer-songwriter

Three hundred and sixty million people worldwide suffer from disabling hearing loss, according to the latest World Health Organization guidelines. Of these cases, half could be avoided through primary prevention, since a main cause is exposure to loud noise. The impact is not just health-related or economic. Exclusion from communication, due to hearing-loss, can have a significant effect on the quality of life of an individual, causing feelings of loneliness, isolation and frustration.

Sound travels as a rapid variation of atmospheric pressure caused by a disturbance in the air. When air molecules vibrate, the ear perceives the variations in pressure as sound. The vibrations are transformed into mechanical energy by the middle ear and finally into nerve impulses. However, if these vibrations are too intense, over time the microscopic hairs in the inner ear can be damaged, bringing on hearing loss.

Traditionally, Mediterranean cultures are known for being loud, and Lebanon is no exception. Its cities are a mishmash of honking, day-long operating generators, sirens and construction works to mention a few sources of noise. “In most urban areas, community noise has emerged as an ever-present, but often underestimated, pollutant,” points out LAU Associate Professor of Chemistry Samira Ibrahim Korfali, who co-authored a study that assesses the community noise problem in the Lebanese capital and its surroundings.

In Korfali’s 2003 research, Assessment of Community Noise Problem in Greater Beirut Area, she identifies urban noise as increasing rapidly. Her findings and recommendations are based on a sample of 1,038 people who were exposed to loud noise. The study also sought to measure attitudes toward noise pollution and perceived annoyance at its occurrence.



"We have a tendency to protect ourselves from any loud noise, as it is perceived by the body as a threat."

—Ketty Sarouphim McGill, LAU
associate professor of psychology
and education

The study, co-authored with May Massoud, professor of environmental health at the American University of Beirut, set out to identify the sources "and possible impacts of the community noise problems in Lebanese urban areas, particularly in the Greater Beirut area." The study found that a strong correlation existed "between exposure level and the proportion of a community highly annoyed by noise. Traffic being the primary source of the sound level."

The study highlighted how even relatively low levels of noise can lead to annoyance and frustration. Natural sounds were found to be less annoying than unnecessary or controllable sound. A tap dripping on a quiet night can be more disturbing than the sound of falling rain. Even more alarming was that noise pollution seems to contribute to a decrease in work performance. "Worldwide around 120 million people have been estimated to suffer from some type of

noise-related disability," explains the specialist in environmental geochemistry.

Recommendations made to reduce noise pollution include monitoring and analyzing community noise at the source, requiring mitigation of construction noise as a condition for project approval, requiring an environmental review of all proposed transportation projects that may create additional noise, and the creation of buffer areas when possible. Lastly, the study recommends the adoption and enforcement of noise policies to prevent new and existing noise sources from increasing. "Adequate policy and legislation frameworks are essential aspects for the maintenance of a national integrated noise management plan," says Korfali.

LAU Associate Professor of Psychology and Education Ketty Sarouphim McGill

has been examining the effects of noise pollution on the individual in terms of stress and the related health hazards it may lead to. For her, noise pollution is clearly "dangerous".

"We have a tendency to protect ourselves from any loud noise, as it is perceived by the body as a threat." The body secretes a high dose of adrenaline as an internal reaction to noise. "When we cannot remove ourselves from the noise pollution, we become annoyed and aggressive, and in the long term these reactions may lead to death," explains Sarouphim. What is most significant, she emphasizes, is that "people are not aware they are being exposed to noise pollution." When noise is too loud, our body perceives it as pain. "This can lead to hypertension, hearing impairment, heart problems, coronary artery disease, and ulcers," she stresses.

Everyday conversation is normally carried out at around 60 decibels, a phone rings at 80 decibels, the sound of a hair dryer is 90 decibels, and an ambulance siren blares out at 120 decibels, as does that of a pneumatic percussion drill. According to WHO guidelines, noise pollution is defined by noise over 80 to 90 decibels. This gives us an idea of how frequently people living in the Greater Beirut area are exposed to damaging sound. The threshold of pain is reached at 140 decibels, similar to the noise of a jet taking off from a distance of 200 feet.

Sarouphim explains that noise pollution can have equally severe effects on individual psychology. It may cause



anxiety, mental fatigue, and behavioral problems. To be able to treat these, it is important that the individual, who is exposed to noise pollution, is aware of the context he or she is placed in. For example, people usually gain this awareness when something changes in their immediate surroundings. A building under construction often constitutes a cause of noise pollution that people tend to recognize.

Coping mechanisms most frequently put in place include the installation of double windows, the use of earplugs, and if possible, moving away from the source of the noise. Additional successful techniques include the creation of a white noise in the environment where the person sleeps. Meditation and self-hypnosis have also been found to be effective in countering the effects of noise pollution.

"People in Lebanon have a classical conditioning reaction to noise," points out Sarouphim, "as they were used to living with the noise pollution of bombs during the war." Many of those, who lived through the war, suffer from undiagnosed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: the body's reaction to excessive noise is to want to run away. Fortunately, once identified, these symptoms can be reversed with therapy.

More recently, Korfali looked at the issue from an environmental perspective. For her, in Lebanon the effects of noise pollution caused by traffic and construction need to be looked at in detail. "Unfortunately, today, due to



"In most urban areas, community noise has emerged as an ever present, but often underestimated, pollutant."

—Samira Ibrahim Korfali, LAU
associate professor of chemistry

the increased population density, the number of cars has doubled and that of motorcycles tripled," she explains. "These, in addition to the continued construction sounds, have drastically increased noise levels and therefore noise pollution in the Greater Beirut area." In her opinion,

one of the side effects of exposure to this increased noise pollution can be seen in the "heightened aggressiveness of the people due to the annoyance of the loud noise that they are constantly exposed to."

Other studies indicate that there is a clear effect on rest, quality of sleep and potentially blood pressure and even cognitive performance in children as a result of chronic noise exposure as opposed to a sudden acute noise. "Unfortunately, noise induced hearing loss is not reversible, hence the importance of prevention," notes Dr. Marc Bassim, associate professor of otology and neurotology at AUBMC.

First and foremost, what needs to take place is an increased awareness of the negative and irreversible effects noise can have on hearing and on health in general. "The following step would be to advocate with governmental institutions to impose limits on noise pollution, such as music levels in restaurants and public places, limitations on construction work in the evening, and mandatory protection for workers at risk of noise exposure," says Bassim.

On the positive side, he highlights that he has noticed an increased awareness with the younger generation, particularly regarding the use of headphones and earphones. "We don't actually know the incidence of hearing loss in Lebanon," says Bassim. "But we should compile national statistics to keep the situation under control." ■



Ice Age populations

By Reem Maghribi

LAU geneticist
Pierre Zalloua leads
revelatory research



"We now know that we, in the Levant, migrated through the north and not directly from Africa."

—Pierre Zalloua, LAU dean of graduate studies and research



A study led by LAU professor Pierre Zalloua published in the journal *Scientific Reports* reveals information about the isolation and migratory patterns of populations from Southwest Asia during and after the last glacial period.

New genetics research led by Zalloua, who is also the university's dean of Graduate Studies and Research, has confirmed the existence of isolated populations around the Black Sea and the Northern Levant during the Ice Age. Referred to as refugia, those populations lived apart from each other with no contact or inter-mixing for over 25,000 years. "This allowed for distinct genetic signatures specific to each refugium to accumulate," he explains.

Zalloua led a team made up of members from New Zealand's University of Otago, Lebanon's Saint Joseph University and the technology company IBM to collect and study new genetic data. "Archeology indicated the existence of populations in certain areas, but it doesn't show that people were isolated," adds the geneticist.

Not only did his team confirm the existence of refugia, they also traced their migration away from their isolation after the first ice melted some 15,000 years ago by mapping the genetic data against existing archaeological, paleontological, paleobotanical and climate data.

Using Y-chromosome markers combined with autosomal data, they reconstructed population expansions from regional refugia in Southwest Asia.

"We now know that we, in the Levant, migrated through the north around 12,000 years ago and not directly from Africa," says Zalloua, noting that such findings enrich our understanding of our historical anthropology and of the significant impact climate plays in the way we live.

The Ice Age forced people who had previously been hunter-gatherers moving from place to place to live in restricted areas where conditions were habitable. This led to the development of communities living in refugia. Among the team's findings was the existence of a refugium that had not previously been known. "We not only identified the expected genetic signatures within refugia around the Black Sea and Northern Levant but also identified a genetic signature marking a refugium in the Arabian Peninsula yet to be identified through archeology."

Details of the distinct and datable expansion routes of these populations into Europe and North Africa are revealed in the study. The journal article expands upon these findings with discussion about the possible correlations of these migrations to various cultural and climatic events evident in the archaeological record of the past 15,000 years.

Such a plethora of discoveries is never anticipated, says Zalloua. "We didn't set out to say anything in particular. We plotted our data on a map together with climate and archeological evidence and it all made sense."

REMARKABLE DISCOVERIES

- Populations lived apart from each other as isolated communities in different habitable areas, or refugia, for 25,000 years during the Ice Age.
- The people of the Levant migrated from Europe 12,000 years ago and not directly from Africa as originally thought.
- A refugia, not previously proposed by archeologists, was present in the Arabian Peninsula.

Is stress eating you up?



Among her other scholarly endeavors, Associate Professor and Coordinator of LAU's Nutrition Program Nadine Zeeni is currently researching the relationship between dietary intake and stress parameters

Stress may cause many physiological changes — such as an increased heart rate, increased respiration, and increased blood flow to muscles — but it can also cause changes in eating behavior. Indeed, chronic daily stress can increase cravings and intake of certain foods called comfort foods, which are usually high in salt, fat and/or sugar and are associated with weight gain and higher disease risk. But do these comfort foods really comfort the stress, as the name suggests?

Everyday stress is variable. We are not consistently exposed to the same stressor at the same time daily, or else we would get used to it. Using the chronic variable stress (CVS) model in rats, we are able to mimic real life stress by applying a different stressor every day at a different time. We randomly expose the animals to a variety of stressors to mimic the unexpected stressors that we are exposed to in real life. Comfort food intake can also be reproduced in rats by using the cafeteria diet model. We provide them with a choice of tasty addictive items, such as chocolate, peanut butter and biscuits, as well as their classic food pellets — so that they can choose whatever they want.

We found that, when exposed to stress, rats served cafeteria food have lower stress hormone levels than those on a balanced diet. There is also a stress-relieving effect with soda access, compared to water as a drink.

So comfort food and drinks do relieve stress. But the bad news is that their consumption leads to an increase in weight, body fat, and risk of disease. Worse, you end up wanting more and eating more, as consumption of these foods and drinks can be addictive and increases cravings. Moreover, gaining weight can become a source of frustration and stress, so it becomes a vicious cycle.

“Comfort foods act like a quick fix and their effects can backfire in the long term.”

Therefore comfort foods act like a quick fix and their effects can backfire in the long term.

We then researched other factors that may reduce stress without the drawbacks of comfort foods. A new variable was included: environmental enrichment. This basically involves placing fun items in the rats' cages, such as toys and running wheels. The equivalent for humans would be opportunities for creativity, learning and development, such as physical activity, good nutrition and a supportive environment. In the end, we found that a positive environment increased resilience to stress regardless of the diet fed to the animals.

So, while comfort food may temporarily reduce stress, it is not the only way. We can enrich our environment by changing our lifestyle. This does not imply making drastic changes that are not realistic or turning our lives upside down. We can start with small changes such as using relaxation techniques and building a healthy circle of friends for social support. In addition, physical activity even if minimal, can improve sleep quality and energy level, and well-nourished bodies are generally better prepared to cope with stress. There is no magic bullet to fight stress, but it is scientifically proven that these sustainable changes will decrease your stress levels and reduce the urge to choose unhealthy foods and overeat.



Postcard from New York: Backdrop of war

By Paige Kollock



Syria watcher Joshua Landis during panel on "Syria's Predicament and the U.S. Role."

LAU's New York Academic Center wrapped up its successful *Syria Resilient* series, a sequence of five events during the fall that aimed at creating an understanding of Syria not as a land of violence, war and tragedy, but as part of the fabric of the U.S. and the place of origin for approximately 150,000 Americans whose ancestors began settling there in the 1880s.

The series began on September 27 with an evening of music and poetry featuring Syrian-Canadian writer Ghada Alatrash. She read excerpts from her book, *Stripped to the Bone: Portraits of Syrian Women*, to the accompaniment of the New York Arabic Orchestra, led by the group's cofounders Bassam Saba and April Centrone.

On October 6, LAU NY teamed up with the Bard Globalization and International Affairs program for a political discussion on Syria titled, "Syria's Predicament and the U.S. Role." The panel included Syria watchers Joshua Landis and Steven Cook and was moderated by journalist Patricia Sabgha.

A musical and visual art performance on November 3 featured a renowned duo: Syrian composer and clarinetist Kinan Azmeh and Syrian-Armenian visual artist Kevork Mourad. Combining

Syria Resilient
series sheds light
on Syrian conflict



Ghada Alatrash reads excerpts from her book *Stripped to the Bone: Portraits of Syrian Women*



Talk following the screening of *Little Gandhi*



Cofounders of the New York Arabic Orchestra Bassam Saba and April Centrone accompany Alatrash's reading

music and live drawing, the artists documented specific moments in Syria's recent history, resulting in an emotional portrayal of the war's impact on their psyche.

The series ended with two separate film screenings: *50 Feet from Syria* — a documentary about Syrian-American neurosurgeon Hisham Bismar, who volunteers at a hospital on the Turkey-Syria border — and *Little Gandhi*, a film about the Syrian activist Ghiyath Matar produced by Syrian American Sam Kadi, who smuggled the footage out of the country on thumb drives taped to someone's body.

All of the events were followed by moderated discussions, allowing audience members to engage with the artists and share their own thoughts on the conflict in Syria.

"LAU offers a unique and intellectual cross-cultural audience that I felt it necessary to reach out to," said Kadi. "The team there has been doing an amazing job working with the people of New York and having our film included in the series is something we wanted to support."

"The series has accomplished our goal of drawing New York audiences empathetically closer to the tragedy of the Syrian people through impactful



Syrian composer and clarinetist Kinan Azmeh and Syrian-Armenian visual artist Kevork Mourad combine music and live drawing

"LAU offers a unique and intellectual cross-cultural audience."

—Sam Kadi, Syrian American producer

panel discussions that accompanied every event," said Lina Beydoun, LAU NY's academic executive director. "Panelists shared their personal involvement in alleviating the conditions of war in diverse and meaningful ways, ranging from poetry, prose, music and visual art, to medical response, hosting refugee families, film documentation, human rights activism, lobbying and policymaking. The resulting effect was a collective sense of hope in humanity."

Courage against cancer

By Reem Maghribi

LAU alumna and faculty
team up to promote early
detection of breast cancer

*"We want to remove the fear
and stigma that surrounds
breast cancer."*

—Myrna Doumit, assistant dean
of LAU's Alice Ramez Chaghoury School
of Nursing



Soon after U.S.-based LAU alumna Hiba Yazbeck (B.S. '97) discovered she had breast cancer, she contacted her alma mater wanting to do something positive for women in Lebanon. The result is a series of awareness-raising sessions across the country titled *"Courage to Fight Breast Cancer."* The series is run by Myrna Doumit, associate professor and assistant dean at the Alice Ramez Chaghoury School of Nursing and funded through a \$10,000 donation by Yazbeck and her husband Chady Wehbe.

"I did a lot of reading after I was diagnosed and I discovered that Lebanese women are more prone to cancer and that more are being diagnosed at a younger age," says Yazbeck of the motivation behind her donation. Indeed, breast cancer is the most widespread type of cancer among women in Lebanon and around 22 percent of cases here are diagnosed in women under the age of 40. Only 6 percent of cases in Western populations are diagnosed in that age bracket.

Yazbeck was 38 in 2014, when a touch test and then a mammography confirmed she had breast cancer. "They found carcinogenic chemicals in my system that are related to living in a war zone or by a landfill," says Yazbeck, who lived in Lebanon throughout the civil war. "They created so many health problems for Lebanon's citizens during the war and now they're doing it again with the garbage. It's a local manmade crisis."

Having had the tumor successfully removed and undergone chemotherapy, Yazbeck, head of finance for the North America operations of a large automotive supplier, is consciously living her life with less stress and in a healthier manner. "Forget about sushi and the exotic food

we try to imitate. Our Mediterranean diet is the best and we should embrace it," points out Yazbeck, who hopes to build on the current program with further series dedicated to nutrition and exercise.

At present, the 60-minute sessions focus on self-examination and the importance of a regular mammogram. "We first want to encourage the women to openly discuss breast cancer and remove the fear and stigma that surrounds it," explained Doumit before turning to an audience of four dozen women in a village in Koura, north Lebanon. After introducing the positive correlation between early detection and survival rate, Doumit uses slides and synthetic breasts to demonstrate how women should examine their own bodies every month.

"It was very insightful and useful," said attendee Yara Chammas of the session. "My mother had cancer and so I'm always looking to learn more and the details and techniques presented today were most helpful."

The session in Koura was the fourth of ten planned, the first having been launched in November last year. All are being held in remote towns across the country in partnership with the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health, which is hosting the sessions at its clinics free of charge. "The next step is to start training the ministry's personnel so that the villagers can come directly to the trainer with questions and concerns," says Yazbeck, who is working on establishing a long-term fund for ongoing initiatives. "We are committed to continuing with the program and have been in touch with friends and family who were also touched by cancer and want to help."



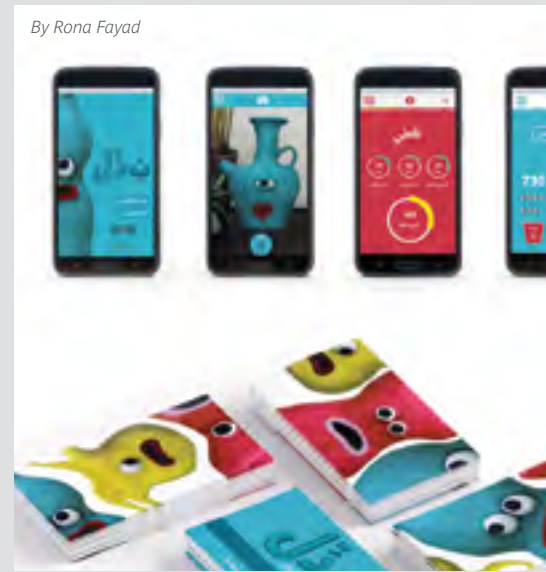
By Wafic Dabbous



By Maya Itani



By Rona Fayad



The future of graphic design

By Irina du Quenoy

Twenty-one graduating
LAU seniors exhibit
their talent

*"We want to have students
graduating with the ability to
compete with international
industries."*

*—Yasmine Taan, associate professor
and chair of LAU's Department of Art
and Design*

"You represent the future. You represent what we all hope for," said Farid Chehab, honorary chairman and adviser of Leo Burnett S.A.'s operation in Beirut, addressing the students gathered — together with dozens of faculty and staff — for the opening of the annual Graphic Design Students' Exhibition in the Sheikh Zayed Gallery of LAU's Safadi Fine Arts Building this past February.

Chehab depicted the world of design as one of "reinvention," in which technological advances are transforming how designers think and create. "Even now," he said, "new technologies are permitting us to create paintings that are themselves sensors... Very soon, even the ink itself will become a tool to connect to your mobile phone."

The exhibition featured 21 capstone projects created by graduating seniors in the Department of Art and Design, works that brought to life Chehab's depiction of a world in which new technologies are redefining manifold aspects of our existence. Wafic Dabbous's project *DYS PLUS*, for example, uses the latest innovations to tackle the issue of dyslexia in Lebanon. Based on his own sister's battle with the condition, Wafic "would like to expose parents and teachers to the real struggles of a dyslexic child by putting them in his/her shoes." *DYS PLUS* does so by combining traditional posters with a flipbook and virtual reality (Google Cardboard) that "will make my audience experience what a dyslexic has to contend with."

Other projects echoed the theme of improving conditions around us through technology. For instance, Rona Fayad's *Baddel* addresses Lebanon's trash crisis by providing "an augmented reality application" that teaches Lebanese citizens how to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills. Maya Itani, for her part, seeks to tackle the heavy traffic in Beirut by "digitizing the process" used by the city's parking meters. The project, titled *Parklik*, incorporates a parking app and digital parking ticket with both traditional and cutting-edge promotional material (posters and animation).

The capstone projects' social orientation and technological sophistication reflect both LAU's ethos of serving the wider community and its commitment to equipping students to meet our century's challenges head on. But in the end, the students' own dedication shines through. The achievements showcased by the exhibit are "the culmination of three and a half years of thinking, training, and developing new concepts ... using typography, illustration, technical skills and thought-provoking ideas to produce innovative work," says Yasmine Taan, associate professor and chair of LAU's Department of Art and Design. The stringent selection process reflects the department's desire to raise the bar: "We want to have students graduating with the ability to compete with international industries," she adds. <http://sard.lau.edu.lb/programs/bs-graphic-design/>

Taking it up a notch

By Reem Maghribi

LAU Athletics Director leads national basketball team to victory one month after appointment as coach

Director of Athletics at LAU Byblos Joe Moujaes led Lebanon's senior men's national basketball team to victory in the West Asia championship in February, one month after being appointed their coach.

"I had something to prove," said Moujaes. "It was my first game as coach (of the National team) and I'm young and I wanted to show that Lebanon's on track," he explained upon his return with the team from the WABA championship in Jordan, having won all five of their games to formally qualify for the FIBA Asia Cup to be held in August 2017. Despite automatically qualifying — since the championship will be hosted by Lebanon — Moujaes had no intention of taking it easy and was particularly pleased that his team was able to win against the Iranian team after seven years of defeats.

About his recent appointment Moujaes proudly says: "It's the most prestigious position a coach can hope to attain." The youngest athlete to lead the national team, Moujaes is also coach to Beirut



"You really have to be well rounded in everything to reach this level and being at LAU gave me the opportunity to do that."

—Joe Moujaes, director of athletics at LAU Byblos

club Homenetmen, who are top of the Lebanese national boards and placed fourth in the Asia club championship, and to the LAU Captains, for whom he played as a power forward while an LAU student until graduating in 2001.

"When I joined the athletics department after graduating I realized that I must



not only develop as an athlete but as a manager as well," he shared. "You really have to be well rounded in everything to reach this level and being at LAU gave me the opportunity to do that. I wouldn't have grown and developed the way I did to become a great coach otherwise," says Moujaes, who complemented his degree in civil engineering from LAU with a master's in sports management, and is the first — and so far only — coach in Asia to obtain the FIBA Europe basketball coaching certificate.

His dedication to self-development and his success with LAU's varsity basketball team was most certainly instrumental in propelling Moujaes to the national level. He and his fellow athletes recently celebrated the win of the LAU Captains men's team at the AUB #150 International Sports Tournament.

"Compassion, hard work, and dedication to LAU in general and its athletic programs in particular are what drive Joe forward," says Dean of Students at Byblos Mars Semaan. "His accomplishments off the field and on the field are too many to enumerate, but his most important endeavors are his love and devotion to his players."

The highly competitive athletics program is run under the Dean of Students office and among its many initiatives is a high-school tournament that provides the university with an opportunity to spot talented youths, many of whom go on to receive athletics scholarships. "I'm delighted hard-working young athletes enjoy this opportunity to gain a strong education here," says Moujaes, whose career as a top athlete has spanned over two decades at LAU.





The everlasting debate

Do genetic or environmental factors have a greater influence on your behavior? Do inherited traits or life experiences play a greater role in shaping your personality? The nature versus nurture debate is one of the oldest philosophical issues within psychology. So what exactly is it all about?

By Federica Marsi

Two twins, Oskar Stohr and Jack Yufe, were given for adoption in 1933 in Trinidad when only a few months old. Oskar was brought up in Germany and joined the Hitler Youth, while a Jewish family raised Jack in the Caribbean. The two were reunited in their fifth decade, only to find striking resemblances despite opposite life paths. A psychologist who examined the twins in the late '70s found in Oskar and Jack similar speech and thought patterns, comparable gaits, a common taste for spicy food and a number of peculiar behaviors held in common, including the habit of flushing the toilet before using it.

Scientific research chronicling the fate of identical twins separated at birth identified genes as the source of this likeness. Researchers have also proven the existence of genetic streaks capable of triggering certain behaviors. The “warrior gene” — or in technical terms Monoamine oxidase A — has been associated, for instance, with higher levels of behavioral aggression.

The impact of this on an individual is a lack of impulse control and higher levels of aggression in response to provocation.

The discovery was made in the early '90s in the Netherlands, where a geneticist analyzed the men in a large nefarious Dutch family known for violent crimes — including arson, attempted murder and a rape. Five generations of this dynasty, all the way back to 1870, exhibited the same genetic defect on the X chromosome.

The idea that biological forces might be behind our actions is, to many, a disturbing thought, for it contradicts the assumption of free will. While many societies like to think that life is the product of conscious deliberations, science questions whether our final decisions might have been written in our genetic code all along. The everlasting Nurture vs. Nature debate is the outcome of the recurring question: to what extent do genes, rather than the environment in which we live, influence the person we become?

If we imagine the Nurture vs. Nature debate as a game of cards, genes are the cards we are dealt, whereas epigenetics — or the expression of a certain gene trait due to environmental factors — is how we play that hand. While individuals are born with a given set of genes, some

“The environment often influences the expression of genes.”

—Maya Bassil, LAU assistant professor of human nutrition

of them might be activated while others lie dormant depending on a variety of external factors.

Maya Bassil, assistant professor of human nutrition at LAU, is currently conducting a study on the role of personality — as a construct of both genes and environment — on the control of diabetes. According to Bassil, “there is an interplay between genes and the environment, but the environment often [prevails as it] influences the expression of these genes.” While the matter cannot be generalized, she argues that those circumstances in which genes such as the “warrior gene” trump the effects of a loving environment should be considered the exception.

Natali Farran, a psychologist taking part in Bassil's research at LAU, also shares the same view. "Trauma and post traumatic stress disorder do have a genetic component, but what is important is also to look at how the environment is playing a role in building up resilience," says Farran.

According to data from a recent study carried out on 333 patients with type II diabetes, conscientious patients are able to restrain their eating. "This means that patients with this personality trait eat healthily, which is crucial for monitoring blood glucose levels," explains Farran. Nevertheless, this relationship changes depending on how powerless and neurotic the person is. In other words, one of the factors determining how a patient with type II diabetes eats, is their personality trait and how they relate to being fatalistic. "The more conscientious type II diabetes patients are, the more they can control their diet," she points out, "Yet, this relationship is also affected by how fatalistic and powerless they are. The more of the latter they are, the less rational and controlled their diets are."

In 2004 researchers at McGill University in Montreal conducted an experiment on rats, in which they found that high-nurturing mothers raised high-nurturing offspring, while low-nurturing mothers raised low-nurturing offspring. While this

seemed like a genetic pattern, it was not. Researchers found that the differences in behavior were due to a change in the glucocorticoid receptor gene (GR) during development. At birth, this gene is highly inactive (methylated). If the rat mother is attentive to the pup, the gene gradually becomes more active (de-methylated). Pups that had been groomed were found to be more relaxed in response to stress later on, while those who were not taken care of were found to respond poorly to stress and even be more prone to disease.

"The 'switching on' of genes involves a complex array of epigenetic modifications to the DNA," explains Matthew Devall, a researcher at the University of Exeter in the U.K. "DNA methylation can be altered by the environment and a number of studies have begun to investigate the role of adverse childhood factors in this modification."

In regard to the correlation between violence and a genetic predisposition determined by streaks such as the "warrior gene," Devall maintains that research on the subject is still limited. "The huge social complexity surrounding terms such as 'an increased propensity towards violence' make delineating the true role between epigenetics and its governance of such a trait very challenging," he says. "Studies to date [...] often use of small samples sizes and inappropriate selection of tissue and

technology. Whilst epigenetics may have a role to play, effectively [pinning down] that role could prove to be impossible, at least in the near future."

However, "improving educational standards, reducing economic burden and promoting acceptance and diversity from a

"Trauma and post traumatic stress disorder do have a genetic component."

—Natali Farran, a psychologist
taking part in research at LAU

young age" are all factors that play a much bigger role in predicting the emergence of violent behaviors, according to Devall. "Whilst genetic research therefore can allow us to determine risk factors, these alone are not enough, and more time should be dedicated to improving the social structures that give rise to these negative attitudes in all aspects of society."

While the similarities between twins can be mesmerizing, the differences between them are at least as telling as their similarities. In one study that sought to determine the heritability of attitudes among twins, a questionnaire asked participants to rate their personality





Oskar Stohr and Jack Yufe

traits, physical abilities and physical attractiveness. Interestingly, non-shared environment experiences between pairs of twins seemed to be the strongest causes of attitude variance, which underlines how the mental state — made up of beliefs, intents, and desires — is predominantly influenced by external factors.

George Bonanno, a clinical psychologist at Columbia University's Teachers College, collected data over a number of years to understand why some people are better than others in dealing with adversity. For instance, Bonanno examined the reactions following potentially traumatic events, such as the September 11 attacks in New York.

His results demonstrated that perception is one of the central elements in building up resilience. This result is based on the assumption that the events are not traumatic unless they are experienced as such, meaning that the experience is not inherent in the event. While some people might take a small happening and turn it into a big stress factor by ruminating over it, others might

"Time should be dedicated to improving the social structures that give rise to negative attitudes."

—Matthew Devall, a researcher,
University of Exeter, U.K.

live through potentially traumatic events by giving meaning to them and using them as an opportunity to learn and grow.

According to Bonanno, resilience is, ultimately, a set of skills that can be taught. The field of positive psychology is currently proving that training people to change their explanatory styles — for instance, teaching that bad events are not their fault — makes people more psychologically successful and less prone to depression. What is therefore a genetic predisposition might not necessarily result in the expression of the trait if well managed at the external level.

The debate between nature and nurture, therefore, might be missing a key ingredient. Decades of research have revealed much about how the mind works and how it can be trained into adopting cognitive skills that might help prevent or overcome certain behaviors. As Farran puts it, individuals with a genetic predisposition to violence can nonetheless be coached toward coping behavior.

The Cure Violence Method, for instance, resulted in significant reductions in shootings and killings in more than 20 communities in Baltimore, Chicago and New York. Workers in this program were armed with modern methods of persuasion, behavior change, and changing community norms — all of which lead to interrupting the cycle of violence.

"It is not the genes that matter in the end," says Farran. "What matters is how much the person believes that [the resulting behaviors] can be changed or prevented." ■

Eager to have an impact

By Reem Maghribi

LAU alumna awarded
prestigious scholarship to
study at Oxford

*"LAU gave me the best of the
best. Most importantly it gave
me self-growth."*

—Diala al Masri, alumna



"I miss LAU. I miss the civic engagement and the culture . . . and the upper gate coffee cart," says alumna Diala al Masri (B.A. '14), who moved to Beirut from her hometown in Mount Lebanon to study political science and international affairs at the university. She later moved to the U.S., where she gained a master's degree in policy economics and economic development.

Al Masri is now preparing for another journey, to the United Kingdom, where she will study for a Ph.D. in economics, thanks to a Rhodes scholarship, a prestigious postgraduate award granted to support exceptional students from around the world study at the University of Oxford.

An exemplary student for many years, al Masri studied at LAU on a merit scholarship and at Williams College, Massachusetts, on a Fulbright scholarship. "I knew during high school that I'd have to work hard to earn a scholarship to study at a good school," she says of her continued determination. "You keep having to maintain it, to prove yourself and be the best you can at that moment given the circumstances."

The economist is now one of the first three students from the Levant to win the renowned Rhodes scholarship, thanks to a new award launched last year through a partnership between Rhodes and the Saïd Foundation.

"These outstanding students are representative of the many exceptional young people whose talents, determination, courage and commitment will build a better future for the region," said Wafic Saïd, founder and chairman of the Saïd Foundation, upon the announcement of the awards.

Her desire to contribute to the betterment of the region and what she describes as "the complexity, diversity and power of economic policy to alleviate poverty," are what motivated al Masri to specialize in economics. "I would hope to come back to Lebanon after I complete my Ph.D., but if not then at least my work will be related to the Middle East and the challenges it faces. I'm interested in low and middle income fragile states, but I'd like to focus on the Middle East because I love it and am from it."

While she can envision a career in academia, al Masri would also like to see her work have influence: "I may produce research that impacts policy or join an international organization, time will tell." Despite the four years of study ahead, al Masri, who has been working as a teaching assistant at Williams since gaining her master's degree last year, is not concerned about becoming a student again.

She will likely be an engaged and active student at Oxford, if her time at LAU is anything to go by. During the three years she spent here, al Masri held multiple positions at the Model United Nations and won the Harvard World MUN Diplomacy Award. She also earned the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Community Ambassador Award and the Torch award for graduating student with the highest GPA in her school.

"I was aware of the multitude of civic engagement programs at LAU and wanted to explore them to the max," says al Masri of her decision to join LAU. "I didn't want just a book education, I wanted a well-rounded education. LAU gave me the best of the best. Most importantly it gave me self-growth."

Beneficial partnerships

By Paige Kollock

LAU and Duke Corporate Education team up to bring South African leaders to NYC

Recently, LAU NY hosted businessmen and women from South Africa, in the framework of Duke University's corporate education professional development program. It was the first time the university had partnered with "Duke CE," which is ranked by the *Financial Times* as the number one provider of corporate education in the U.S. and number three globally.

"Duke CE wanted to bring their program to the heart of the financial capital of the world," says Wassim Shahin, assistant provost for Special External Projects at LAU, who instituted the partnership.

"The MOU we signed with Duke CE is crucial, because Duke is a well-known academic institution with a leading business school that has a presence in several countries," Shahin adds. "Their executive education programs have an academic aspect, which separates them from the many money-making training centers around the world."

Participants in the program were carefully selected by their superiors and by BANKSETA, the organization that underwrote the program. BANKSETA helps advance the national and global position of the banking and micro-finance industry in South Africa by promoting employment equity and broad-based black economic empowerment.

The Duke CE program runs throughout the year, with sessions in Lagos, Nigeria and Johannesburg, South Africa. On this particular trip, the group spent a week in Durham, North Carolina, home to Duke University, where they visited a variety of companies such as Suntrust, Fidelity Lab,

Barings, Queen City, Square 1, American Underground and Spreedly. This was followed by a week in LAU-NY, where they experienced program sessions with such titles as "Mergers & Acquisitions," "Strategic Thinking for Investment Bankers," "Thinking as Entrepreneurial and Entrepreneurial Leaders," "Inside the Minds of Regulators," among others.

"Our goal was to show them the contrast between emerging markets and developed markets," says Karen Roux, managing director of Duke CE in Johannesburg. "It allowed them to see how companies operate here, witness the hustle and bustle, and develop the critical thinking to allow them to know what they need to change."

For program participant Ntombi Ngema, global head of the Sanctions Desk at The Standard Bank in South Africa, the Duke CE program gave participants a globalized view, as well as the tools to occupy a more senior leadership role.

"There's a leadership crisis in the African continent at the moment," Ngema explains. "We have a bunch of elderly leaders that are phenomenal and a very vibrant youth but in between there's a vacuum. This program helps fast-track those that are almost ready, so that as the senior guys retire, we are ready to take the reins."

Shahin says he has succeeded in signing strategic partnership MOUs with other prestigious institutions, including the University of Cambridge and more recently, the University of Chicago, all of which serve the university's goals of advancing LAU's entrepreneurial impact.

"This program helps fast-track those that are almost ready to take the reins."

—Ntombi Ngema, program participant



Best practices in post-conflict societies

By Linda Dahdah

LAU hosts top experts from around the world to discuss peace building



Political party leaders, legislators, researchers, professors, members of civil societies and nongovernmental organizations from around the world gathered at LAU Byblos to debate the importance of electoral law reforms in post-conflict societies.

"The conference was very timely," says Marwan Rowayheb, chair of LAU's Department of Social Sciences, who hosted the event in collaboration with the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) and the Arab Network for Democratic Elections (ANDE). "We believe that scholars and policy makers should join forces to try and get both the governments and the people to enjoy stable and sustainable democratic systems. The main prerequisite for which is to hold free and fair elections."

Nashat Mansour, dean of the university's School of Arts and Sciences, agrees that electoral law reform is key to realizing progress at all levels. "In Lebanon, researchers will not have much difficulty in establishing that the existing system has proved to be impotent, as far as the economic and social progress is concerned, and has condoned unprecedented levels of corruption, disrupting the roles of the judiciary and law enforcement."

For Mansour, even those in power cannot deny that "no serious reform can take place in the existing system unless the electoral law is changed in a way that allows the suppressed segments of the population to be represented in the parliament." However, he adds, this leads to serious challenges and raises major questions pertaining to the nature of the reforms adopted in divided societies that are often based on sectarianism.

Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq are only a few examples of such societies according to Makram Ouais, LAU assistant professor of political science and international affairs, who points out that the conflicts the MENA region has been witnessing are amongst the most violent in recent memory. "One thing we are sure of is that once the cannons have stopped, the difficult process of peace building will begin," he says.

Ziad Abdel Samad, part-time faculty and executive director of the Arab NGO Network for Development and Coordinator at ANDE, stressed on the important role played by electoral management bodies and their experience in the field. Representatives of such organizations, like the Election Observation Democracy Support that supports EU election observation and the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections were also among the conference's participants.

Reflecting on the recent regional and global context, Stephan Rosiny, research fellow at GIGA Institute for Middle East Studies asks: Did the 'Arab Spring' advance the democratization process in the Middle East? Referring to the Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president, the researcher wonders if the world is experiencing some kind of crisis of democracy. "But democracy is a process that we must preserve, defend and improve."

"Once the cannons stop, the difficult process of peace building will begin."

—Makram Ouais, LAU assistant professor of political science and international affairs

The objective of the three-day conference was to discuss how such reforms would impact the region's deeply divided societies and how they could contribute in conflict mediation through lessons learned from the many attempts undertaken to improve the representativeness of political power. Top experts from Nepal, Indonesia, Nigeria and El Salvador shared the experience of their respective countries and regions.

LAU pays tribute to founding director of women's institute

By Reem Maghribi

Current and former
students, faculty and staff
gathered to honor Julinda
Abu Nasr of the Institute
for Women's Studies in
the Arab World

*"Julinda believed in
empowerment and
development of women
long before they became
buzzwords."*

—Ghena Ismail, LAU alumna



The same year the university accepted men into some of its programs, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) was established under the leadership of Julinda Abu Nasr, in honor of the university's legacy as a pioneering institution for the education of women. The year was 1973 and LAU had another first under its belt.

Abu Nasr ultimately led the institute for 24 years, developing a plethora of initiatives and programs dedicated to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women across the region. IWSAW launched the peer-reviewed journal *Al Raïda* (The Pioneer) in 1976. An article in its first issue makes reference to a newly established documentation center housed in the LAU Riyad Nassar Library, named after the former university president, who insisted Abu Nasr take on the role. During the ceremony, the collection, which now includes over 30,000 books, was named in Abu Nasr's honor.

Standing in the midst of the collection, Abu Nasr recalls the library fondly, not least because of the help she received from librarian Samira Rafidi as she embarked on leading IWSAW. Through research Abu Nasr felt she could make the world at large aware of the problems women faced. "How can an institute for women function if 98 percent are living in poverty and ignorance? We need to bridge the gap between them and the two percent at university," she said of the motivation behind *Al Raïda*.

Over time, new initiatives were launched, including vocational training for women in rural Lebanon and advocacy for gender balance in children's books. Indeed, merging her roles as an educator and the head of the IWSAW, Abu Nasr spearheaded a review of 1,000 children's

books to highlight prevalent gender stereotypes, resulting in workshops tailored for children's book authors.

Speaking of the importance of the many initiatives and programs striving toward gender equality in the region, LAU President Joseph G. Jabbra saluted Abu Nasr for reflecting the strong roots and vision of both the university and the institute.

The institute's fifth and current director Lina Abirafeh warmly welcomed Abu Nasr in front of a packed audience of current and former students and colleagues, "She has been a pioneer in more ways than we can imagine." Another former director, Professor of English and comparative literature Samira Aghacy, joined in, "Julinda is an outstanding woman with boundless energy."

"The institute has become a strong arm of the university in advocating for women's rights ... and there is no better reward for creative people than to see their creation cherished by future generations," said Riyad Nassar himself applauding Abu Nasr and her legacy.

LAU alumna Ghena Ismail also spoke fondly of her mentor. "Julinda believed in empowerment and development of women long before they became buzzwords," said Ismail, who worked with Abu Nasr at IWSAW in the 1990s. "The office was a vibrant space open to new ideas and people, transcending sect, age and race. It brought together scholars and laypersons free from discrimination."

[1] Julinda Abu Nasr, LAU President Joseph G. Jabbra and former President Riyad Nassar.

[2] Current director and deputy director Lina Abirafeh and Myriam Sfeir, Julinda Abu Nasr and President Jabbra.

A journey of discovery

By Reem Maghribi

Gibran through the perspective of women

"Despite his fame, Gibran has never been presented through the perspective of women."

—Omar Moujaes, LAU instructor in performing arts

"It was an exhilarating experience. Ever since I was a student here it was my dream to direct the major production," says LAU instructor in performing arts Omar Moujaes, who directed the eclectic play *The Prophet's Anonym*, staged in the fall.

"It was a big responsibility, more than if I'd staged it at a public theater, because I was working with my own students," adds Moujaes, who himself graduated from the Communication Arts department in 2012.

The play is based on the life of renowned writer Gibran Khalil Gibran and the production was well received

by the public and media, despite the sensitivity of the subject matter and the director's fears. "Gibran is a national icon and we were taking the audience on a journey of discovery into the many women in his life," says Moujaes. "We had to choose our words carefully so as not to offend."

The play is set on a ship that is making its journey to Orphalese, the fictional city from which the title character of Gibran's most famous book, *The Prophet*, leaves by ship. As such, it is in some ways a prequel to Gibran's book of moral stories.



Just as the book's protagonist Almostafa speaks with different characters during his voyage away from Orphalese, so too does Gibran during his voyage – during which his sick brother and mother join him. He converses with the women that have crossed his path using a text based on real letters written to and from them.

"By my character reading the letters out loud, those unfamiliar with Gibran's book and the fantasy world it inhabits — which is reflected in our play — are led to understand," says Maria Bechara, an LAU graduate who played the part of May Ziadeh, a Lebanese author with

whom Gibran exchanged letters for years without ever meeting.

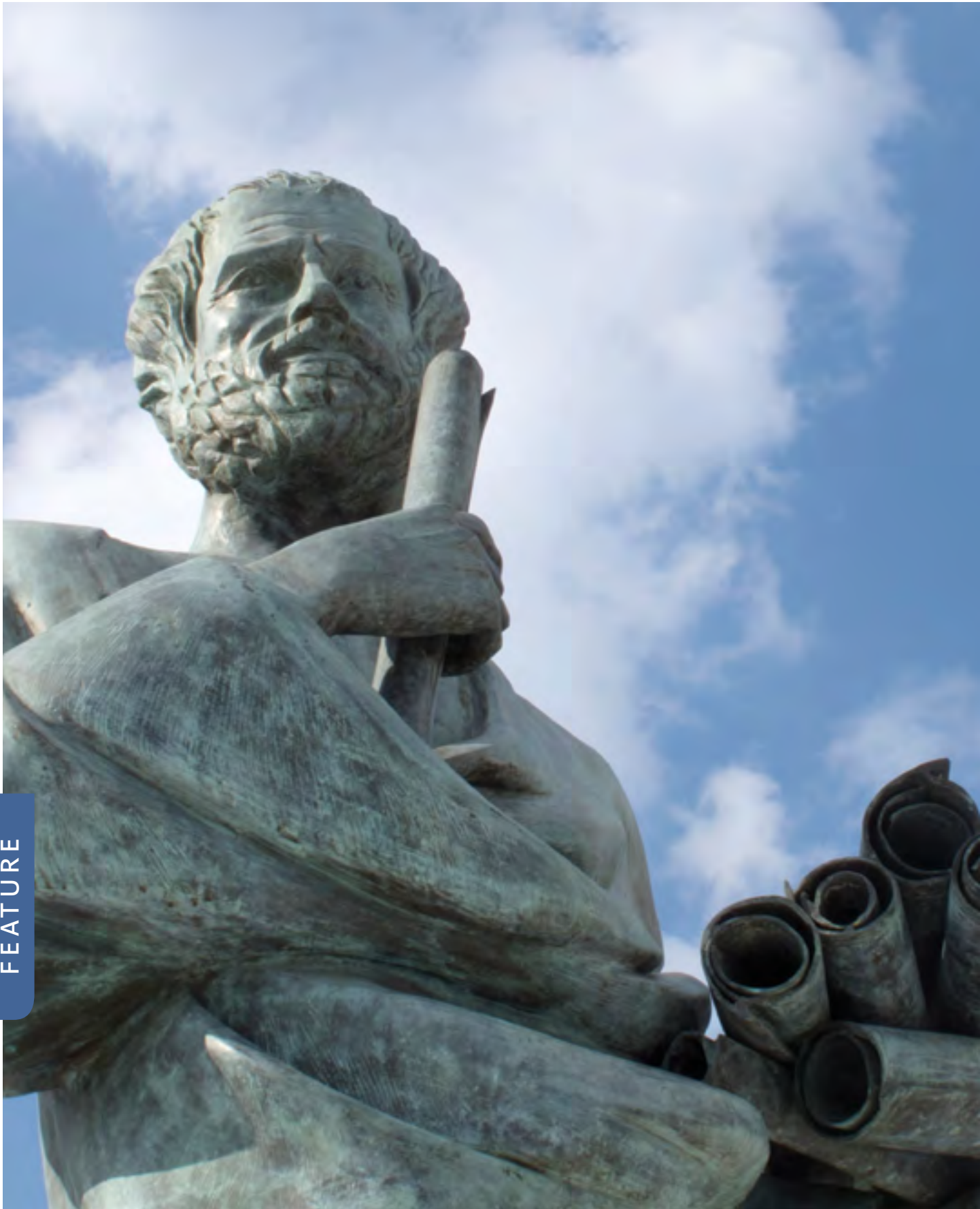
While Ziadeh's character is crucial to the play, the fact that many women influenced and affected Gibran's work is the central message. "Despite his fame, Gibran has never been presented through the perspective of women. I found that most interesting," says Bechara, who also enjoyed the opportunity to compose music for the production.

Music and dance are as prevalent as dialogue in the play. Just as Gibran expressed himself through prose, poetry and drawing, Moujaes did through

jazz, tango and a host of other styles. "We started with the script and worked collaboratively to add movement and sound," he explains.

The script was based on a book written by Moujaes' uncle Dr. Salim Mujais, who has for years studied the many letters exchanged between Gibran and his female friends. "I was so pleased my uncle came from Chicago to watch the play. The production presented a different interpretation to his own, but he loved it." Judging by the online and media coverage the production garnered, so too did many others.





Understanding human nature

True or false: on the whole human beings want to be good, but not too good and not quite all the time.

By Irina du Quenoy

What is it that makes us human, distinguishing us from other mammals? What drives us to do the things we do, making us who we are? Variations on this theme have been at the core of humankind's seemingly never-ending search for truth, influencing the most important directions in philosophy, art, literature and science across history and cultures.

The "nature versus nurture" debate within the natural sciences has been ongoing for centuries (see page XX). In this article, we take a look at the philosophical and theological side of the question. How have philosophers and religious thinkers understood human nature and what are some of the political implications of their debates on how society is ordered?

The difficulties of pinning down what human nature really is can be seen already in the case of the Ancient Greeks. What did they think of it all? "The answer," says Brian Prescott-Decie, senior instructor of English and cultural studies at LAU, "is that they were confused." In fact, "for most Greeks the question of human nature did not appear at all" and it was only the Socratic school that really grappled with the issue.

Of the followers of Socrates, it was probably Aristotle who had the greatest influence on how Western civilization would come to understand human nature all the way up until the Enlightenment. He posited an invariable and metaphysical human nature, which exists independently of individual humans. In this version, it is our nature that causes us to become what we become, throughout our lives: we do things *because* we are human. The implication here is that a divine force exists that created us the way we are.

This would have obvious consequences for Christian thinkers, who would engage with the concept of human nature as the pagan Roman Empire transformed first into a Christian society and then collapsed altogether. But this transformation was not fully complete until about 530 AD, and according to Prescott-Decie, in the meantime, most citizens of the Roman Empire — pagan heirs of Greek classical thought — "still saw human nature in the same way their ancestors saw it: they didn't try to define it precisely." Indeed, he says, "They were interested in defining physical nature (the stars, geography, physics, etc.) and human nature was a long way down the list."

If, like Aristotle, we assume that there is such a thing as a fixed human nature, the logical question is as follows: are human beings born intrinsically good or intrinsically bad? "According to the Qu'ran," says LAU Associate Professor of Arabic and Persian Literature Vahid Behmardi, "every human being is created by God as good by nature, because when the Creator is good, His creation must be good in its nature." In the Islamic view, people commit evil acts because their good nature can be "corrupted by worldly factors," not because we are fundamentally evil.

On the other side of the globe, the Ancient Chinese debated the question intensely. For the philosopher Mencius — who stands out as probably the most important representative of the Confucian tradition, "everyone has a heart-mind which feels for others." According to Jeffrey Richey, associate professor of religion and director of the Asian Studies Program at Berea College, Kentucky, Mencius claims that this basic inclination to do good is at the heart of human nature: "What makes us human is our feelings of commiseration for others' suffering; what makes us virtuous ... is our development of this inner potential."

At the same time, Richey notes that Mencius recognized that the basic inclination to be good “may be stunted (although never destroyed) through neglect or negative environmental influence” (akin to the “worldly factors” mentioned by Behmardi). To be fully realized, this inclination “requires cultivation” through ritual and “yoga-like disciplines related to one’s *qi* (vital energy).”

The Chinese Legalist philosophers opposed this Confucian emphasis on the cultivation of inner goodness. In their view, humans are overwhelmingly selfish and self-seeking. For Shang Yan, an important Chinese statesman of the State of Qin during the Warring States period, the way to prevent anarchy is for “the laws regulating officials to be clear; one does not rely on men to be intelligent and thoughtful.” Han Fei, another influential political philosopher of the Warring States period, also underscored the importance of “uniform and inflexible laws,” i.e., that people had to be *taught* (and even forced) to be good, according to a system of legal norms that was not in fact natural to them.

Similarly, Christian thinkers could not — and still have not — come to a consensus on the issue. Here, the question revolves around original sin or “ancestral fault,” that is, the disobedience that caused God to throw the first created humans out of Paradise and its consequences. In contrast to Islam, where, according to Behmardi, “there is

no concept of original sin,” the differing Christian positions can be grouped very roughly around two competing poles, which can be thought of as a “soft” and “hard” understanding of the “fallen” human nature.

St. Paul’s formulation, expressed in one of his letters to the Romans, that “sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned,” remains a fundamental Christian belief. But does this mean we are fundamentally inclined to commit evil acts? Not necessarily.

“The Christian view is that humans are created in the image of God, in each of us a divine spark that mirrors something of our creator in us,” says LAU Associate Professor of History and Cultural Studies Habib Malik. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, this fact of creation in the image of God means that humans have a “powerful surge toward the good.” And while humans “remain weakened and inclined to evil,” we retain the freedom to choose whether to indulge the good or evil tendencies in ourselves.

For many Protestant denominations, however, Adam and Eve’s sin resulted in the total depravity of humanity, corrupting us so totally that we cannot help but be evil. John Calvin, one of the most influential European leaders of the Protestant Reformation, put it starkly, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: “Original sin, therefore, seems to be a

hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused into all parts of the soul.” From this point of view, the only hope remains the external intervention of God’s grace, which can save us despite ourselves.

By the 17th century, the Christian debate receded into the background as the Enlightenment emerged and philosophers began thinking about human nature outside the bounds of religious considerations. “The underlying assumption of human self-sufficiency,” says Malik, “was the biggest philosophical change, in which we took man as the measure of all things,” removing God from the equation. This self-sufficiency was driven by a “veneration of human reason,” expressed perhaps most famously by Descartes in his dictum “I think, therefore I am.” Here, human thought becomes human nature.

To make things even more complicated, it turns out that — some 2,400 years after Aristotle — philosophers are still questioning not just whether or not our nature has some kind of connection to the divine but whether or not human nature itself even exists. “The idea is to deny that humans have a nature,” says Rami el Ali, assistant professor of philosophy at LAU. He is referring to phenomenology, a philosophical strain that emerged in the early 20th century and united such diverse figures as Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre.

El Ali neatly described the traditional



The Holy Trinity, with the Virgin and Saint John and donors— a fresco by Masaccio



The Delivery of the Keys, or Christ Giving the Keys to St. Peter, a fresco by Pietro Perugino



The Garden of Earthly Delights, a triptych painted by the Early Netherlandish master Hieronymus Bosch

view previously described here as “essence precedes existence.” For the phenomenologists, in contrast, “the reverse is true: your essence is determined by your existence, meaning that your nature (or who you are) is determined by what you do and not the reverse.” From this point of view, we are all constantly reinterpreting ourselves, engaging in an act of self-creation: “By performing certain acts you paint a certain picture of yourself and nothing tells you what this picture should look like; what determines the outcome are the commitments that you have and the actions that you end up performing,” explains el Ali.

Turning, finally, to the political implications of seemingly abstract debates on human nature, one could write dozens of volumes and still not do the topic justice. Here, we conclude this discussion with a few observations that must serve as food for further thought.

The first is that the debate over humanity’s innate “goodness” or “badness” is far from academic: if you assume the former, then society can be trusted to govern itself relatively fairly without the interference of state authorities. From a different point of view, if one follows the Islamic teaching that the basic goodness of people coexists with the unfortunate fact that some of us will commit bad acts because of negative

external influences, then, according to Behmardi, “the state has to safeguard the people according to what has been ordained by God in His Holy Book,” by punishing evildoers.

If, on the far end of the spectrum, you assume that humans tend more toward the “bad,” a powerful government must step in to correct the situation, in order to avoid social catastrophe. This belief in fact made Shang Yan and his followers strong proponents of a law-based, brutally imposed state order in Ancient China.

Similarly, if you decide that human nature has nothing to do with divinity and that there is no “divine spark” capable of transforming humans into positive social actors, then you look for other sources of transformation. Once again, for the European thinkers of the Enlightenment, the answer lays in the state. In the view of Thomas Hobbes, an English philosopher who is considered one of the founders of modern political philosophy, the fact that humans do not have a divinely driven tendency toward the good means that their life is likely to be (famously) “nasty, brutish and short,” characterized by brutality and violence; the only way out of this situation is for the state (in his terms, the “Leviathan”) to take on the role of God, forcing people to behave through the institutions of law and order. It is not a far step from here toward the “welfare

state,” where the government takes on itself welfare functions on the assumption that humans, left to themselves, will not naturally want to help the poor and needy.

Finally, and perhaps even more importantly, the “veneration of reason,” to use Malik’s term, that characterized the Enlightenment led to “incredible material progress, unleashing science and the Industrial Revolution.” Among its many consequences it also led to the utopian idea that our mode of life could and should be reshaped by humanity itself. Where the human mind could be trusted to build just and equal societies without relying on belief in anything other than itself thus putting reason and rationality at the core of who we are. This understanding of human nature resulted in the communist tragedies that played out in Russia, China and other corners of the world during the twentieth century and whose consequences we are still living with. It may be that those political phenomena that trouble us presently — from the rise of the Far Right in Europe and the United States to the emergence of ISIS, among others — have at their core the rejection of an understanding of human nature that privileges reason, proposing instead to elevate irrationality into the seat driving our lives. ■

With a little help

By Zalfa Halabi

LAU community comes
together to celebrate
nature's seasons

"At LAU, we work hard to ensure that each student gets a well-balanced education, one that gives them all the theories and structure they need but at the same time provides them with real professional experience," says Seba Ali, lecturer of music at LAU's Department of Communication Arts.

In that spirit, the university's students got to share the stage this past fall with world-renowned opera singer Malinda Haslett. The famous soprano directed *A Musical Extravaganza*, a concert dedicated to nature's four seasons, in which faculty, staff and students performed side by side at the Gulbenkian Theatre.

The show came together smoothly despite less than a week of rehearsals, with

a diversity of songs that explored themes associated with each season. Stage effects provided much appreciated moments of beauty, such as leaves dropping from the catwalk as students walked across the stage accompanied by songs eulogizing the fall. And Haslett herself sang while Ali played the piano and Assistant Professor of music Amr Selim joined with the French horn.

A passionate and thoughtful vocal coach and director, the New York based Haslett began rehearsing the day after her arrival to Beirut. Initially, the concert was to have one, possibly two, students join, as according to Haslett, producing, rehearsing and performing a concert of this magnitude is quite an intense enterprise.



"At LAU, we work hard to
ensure that each student gets
a well-balanced education."

—Seba Ali, lecturer of music at LAU's
Department of Communication Arts

"However, Seba [Ali] found that many students expressed their desires to participate and they were fully committed to bringing their very best to the table, which they absolutely did," says Haslett. In the end communication arts students, joined by a peer from the pre-med program, were involved as performers, lighting designers, technical assistants and volunteers.

"A work of this nature would usually cost several thousand dollars and be rehearsed over several weeks. Instead, we were able to rehearse it all, give two workshops that involved almost one hundred students and perform two concerts in a matter of ten days," exclaims Haslett. "This is a rare

accomplishment and I am so happy to have been part of it."

Curating and putting together the show in such a short time helped build the students' confidence. "Malinda [Haslett] gave me tactical advice that I probably wouldn't learn in class," says student performer Omar Hamadeh. "It's good to diverge from sticking to technique 100 percent and get advice from a professional's real experience in today's industry."

During the concert Haslett introduced each new song with a little story. She dedicated "Summertime" to the crowd, explaining that the song was meaningful to her as her mother used to sing it to her as a child. As she was finishing the first

verse, the giggles of a child in the crowd reverberated, making Haslett smile.

"I was thrilled to have given my talent and time to LAU. I feel that I received, in return, just as much positive energy and excitement about music as I gave," she says.

Within this framework the Performing Arts program at LAU has organized several concerts and workshops involving national, regional and international experts and artists including "Conflict and Music", "Art and Politics: A Mutual Relation", "Music and Movement", among others.



Commitment to Excellence



LAU celebrates the first regional clinical simulation graduates

Last October, 22 practitioners and trainers received the Diploma in Clinical Simulation offered by the LAU Gilbert & Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine in collaboration with the University of Illinois. This initiative is the first in the MENA region to address the gap between theoretical learning and medical practice. The graduates will use their newly-acquired knowledge for the benefit of their students and fellow colleagues.

"This gathering marks the distribution of the first diploma of its kind in the entire region," said LAU President Joseph G. Jabbara at the graduation ceremony held in Byblos. "It symbolizes the importance of simulation-based education and the need for all professionals to have excellent training."

LAU's Clinical Simulation Center, the first of its kind regionally, offers a safe environment in which practicing health providers can develop and test their skills when confronted with diverse and recurrent medical scenarios. As well as improving the students' learning experience, the center also offers researchers the opportunity to experiment and test their own theories.

Training journalism students to identify and fight racism through data

In a three-day workshop, LAU journalism students and participants from outside the university learned how to identify and combat hate speech against refugees using data driven-stories and multimedia skills. The event was held at LAU Beirut in February and was organized by the Multimedia Journalism Program with the support of the Canadian embassy. It focused on case studies about consent, transparency, reliance on social media, fact-checking, data visualization, and the practice of tools and data relevant to concrete situations in Lebanon.

In collaboration with the Canadian NGO Journalists for Human Rights — who have years of experience in journalism training specifically targeting human rights issues — the workshop aimed to provide future Lebanese journalists with tools enabling them to influence human rights issues in their country. "You don't realize how powerful you are going to be as journalists," Canadian Ambassador to Lebanon Michelle Cameron told the participants. "But with that power comes responsibility. You have to learn critical skills and objectivity. This is going to help you to move from emotion-based reporting ... to fact-based reporting ... Maybe some of you will help change the situation by highlighting human rights issues."



General Security officers get leadership training

Thirty general security officers — men and women from different professional backgrounds — are taking part in the first Certified Leadership Program organized and implemented by LAU's Outreach and Civic Engagement office. The program was launched in February in a ceremony that gathered high-ranking officials at the Outreach and Leadership Academy (OLA) – Solidere, which was inaugurated last November by LAU and the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development (HFSHD). The training, divided in three phases, consists of a series of workshops on emotional intelligence, creative conflict resolution, and negotiation skills among others, and will conclude with an individual developmental plan. The program also includes a workshop at the LAU New York Academic Center.

Community Engagement



LAU runs and raises awareness about donating blood at the Beirut Marathon

Every year, LAU runs the Beirut Marathon for a cause. This time, 84 LAU students, faculty and staff ran for blood donation and the NGO Donner Sang Compteur (DSC). "It is an honor to have LAU join us in such an event," said Thomas Tabet, LAU alumnus and marketing manager of DSC. "Yorgui Teyrouz, founder of DSC, and myself were very proud to have our university supporting us," he added. The positive impact of the university's participation was immediately perceptible. "LAU is one of the biggest universities in Lebanon and the region, and to see such institutions support us was great," said Tabet. In the spirit of encouraging goodwill and compassion, volunteering for LAU was reflected in many ways. This year, LAU was present intensively on the 42 Km, 21 Km, special needs, and 7 Km Fun Run races' course in the form of a very large water and cheering station that included more than 130 volunteers.

Byblos wall beautified by Architecture and Design students

The wall of a bridge in Byblos underwent a creative and colorful makeover in December, when students, faculty, staff and alumni from the School of Architecture and Design came together to brighten the lackluster facade. Foundation-year students worked under the supervision of LAU faculty Melissa Plourde Khoury and Ruth Maalouf, as well as artists from NGO Paint Up (more commonly known by their nom de guerre Dihzahyners) to bring color and life to the port city's urban landscape. Seven paintings were selected from a total of 64 proposed individually by students of the program. The initiative was an extension of the strong partnership the university and municipality forged years ago in the interest of serving the local community and embedding community service within LAU's curricula and student experiences.



Academic Collaboration



A new CEP center in Sidon

The newly established learning center in Sidon opened in October as part of a collaboration between LAU's Continuing Education Program (CEP) and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture for Sidon and South Lebanon will be the third off-campus CEP center instituted in the country. "We now have partnered learning sites in Tripoli, Zahle and Sidon and as such have completed our strategic goal of ensuring full coverage of CEP services across Lebanon," explains CEP Director Michel Majdalani.

Eighty-five percent of businesses in South Lebanon are small to medium enterprises, said a representative for the Chamber of Commerce during the ceremony. "We at the chamber represent the private sector and want to reinforce skills and strengthen our work force. That's why we are here today to sign and combine our efforts with the expertise of LAU to introduce the people of Sidon and the south to skills and careers that are needed by SMEs."

LAU establishes an Umayyad museum in Byblos

LAU has just signed a memorandum of understanding with the municipality of Byblos to establish a museum dedicated to the Umayyad civilization. This agreement is part of the Umayyad Route project made possible thanks to a grant from the European Commission to improve Mediterranean territorial cohesion by enhancing the cultural heritage of the Umayyad dynasty. "The municipality of Byblos has committed to the development of the museum, which will be on the premises of the LAU-Louis Cardahi Foundation, situated in the old city," said Rachid Chamoun, director of the LAU-Louis Cardahi Foundation and coordinator of the Umayyad project in Lebanon. "Even if Byblos may not be considered as an Umayyad city, it is a main part of the Lebanese cultural itinerary along with the historic coastal cities of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon and Tyr, that we have developed," he explained. "This is a historic event in the City of History," declared LAU President Joseph G. Jabbara at the signing ceremony that took place in November.



LAU and the university of Chicago seal historic partnership

LAU has partnered with the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy to establish an exchange program that will enable master's students in applied economics to study at one of the United States' premier academic institutions. "This opportunity is very timely," said LAU President Joseph G. Jabbra at the signing ceremony. "LAU embraces the new notion of international universities." Jabbra thanked LAU's faculty members who worked in collaboration with the Harris School of Public Policy for over a year to craft the terms of the dual partnership. "It was an agreement based on collaboration, something that is required in our modern world," said Jabbra. According to Kerwin Charles, interim dean of the Harris School, the two institutions are bound together by their emphasis on analysis and critical thinking. Charles welcomed the agreement as "historic."



"We looked around the world for an institution that shared our values and we found LAU," he said during the October signing ceremony at LAU. Thanks to the dual partnership, one of many the university has forged around the world, students from LAU who have successfully completed the first year of the master's in applied economics will be able to conduct coursework at Harris and pursue internships and career placement opportunities through their U.S. partner. Conversely, LAU will be providing the same services, welcoming Harris students to its campus.

Culture of Giving



Midis Group to establish a new computer center

Midis Group recently made a contribution to LAU in order to establish the Midis Group Student Computer Center located at the anticipated Engineering Labs and Workshops Building located on the Byblos campus. For Midis, LAU and President Joseph G. Jabbra have achieved so much in bringing the university up to an excellent and international standard. During the signing ceremony the group voiced its pride in being part of LAU's achievements and hoped that its participation would "add a small drop to the big achievements of LAU." Slated to open in fall 2017, the computer center will offer high-quality computing facilities and services for students, faculty, and staff in order to support the teaching, research, and educational endeavors of the university's School of Engineering.



Société Générale de Banque au Liban makes another significant donation to LAU

Société Générale de Banque au Liban (SGBL) has pledged an additional \$1 million toward their 2012 donation to establish a major sports facility at LAU Byblos. This brings their total contribution to \$7 million for the sports center. SGBL's chairman and CEO Antoun Sehnaoui commented, "A proper campus sports facility is critical for students to maintain a healthy mind and body." The sports center is expected to house a swimming pool, an indoor multipurpose court, a gymnasium, dance rooms, squash courts, exercise rooms, and several outdoor fields, among other facilities.

Founder of California Gardens to establish state-of-the-art nutrition lab

Fouad el-Abd, the founder and president of leading canned food company California Gardens, has pledged a substantial gift toward LAU to establish the Fouad el-Abd Nutrition Lab in the university's Science Building located at the Byblos campus. "I really hope that the gift will help students to grow and develop products, and to eventually create thriving businesses which help a lot of people in the process," commented el-Abd, a member of LAU's Board of International Advisors, during the signing ceremony. The nutrition lab is expected to provide food testing as well as experiential research opportunities for students as they prepare for their careers in the industry.



Conferences

How to resolve the Syrian conflict?

Participants from 15 countries representing 25 nationalities and 10 different religious groups took part in a two-day conference organized by LAU's Institute for Social Justice and Conflict Resolution (ISJCR), in collaboration with the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID). Fifty academics and practitioners, providing a comparative overview of countries that have known or are currently suffering political instability similar to the one in Syria, attended the event, which took place in November at the university's Beirut campus. "Our aim was to exchange expertise and discuss how such conflicts can be resolved and what kind of processes can help put an end to the conflict in Syria," explained ISJCR Director Imad Salamey.



LAU & Adyan host inter-religious dialogue experts

Thirty-four academics, policy makers, religious leaders and opinion makers from across the world gathered at LAU Beirut over two days in December to discuss religious freedom and the construction of citizenship. Among other speakers, Father Adrien Sawadogo from Mali and Burkina Faso shared experiences of a loss of diversity in African countries, while Gwen Griffith-Dickinson, visiting professor of theology at King's College London and director of the Lokahi Foundation, spoke about the devaluation of truth in increasing narcissistic societies. The Institute of Citizenship and Diversity Management at Adyan Foundation organized the conference in partnership with LAU. "We are gathered to discuss issues that are at the very heart of the human condition, anywhere and anytime, let alone in our part of the world here and now," said LAU Provost George K. Najjar.





Carol AbdulKhalek

Unfamiliar territory

By Irina du Quenoy

LAU exchange students reinforce the university's international status

"The hardest moments in the entire exchange program are the couple of days before leaving home," says LAU student Sameh Amer, currently studying in Denmark through an exchange program with the Aarhus School of Business and Social Sciences. That being said, her fears about a semester abroad in an unfamiliar environment disappeared upon arrival in Aarhus. "The university cares a lot about its international students and provided us with mentors, who are very supportive."

Amer is only one of dozens of LAU students studying abroad during the 2016-2017 academic year. They are attracted by the increasingly diverse range of options provided by the university's Office of International Services (OIS), which coordinates direct semester-long student exchanges with foreign institutions, as well as faculty-led programs that take place abroad, summer programs abroad, Erasmus grants and courses available at LAU NY for Lebanon-based students. The office also facilitates the experience of international students coming to Lebanon to study for a semester at LAU's two campuses in Beirut and Byblos.

"LAU is committed to engage in



Sameh Amer

international student exchange and study abroad programs in order to literally put the world within the reach of its students," says OIS International Associate Program Manager Dina Abdul Rahman. In addition to providing students with an invaluable life experience, such an approach is meant to "reinforce the university's strategy to internationalize its campuses, expand on its international exposure and cement LAU's position as a globally connected university," she adds.

Whether through participation in the European Erasmus partnership program

or individual agreements with foreign universities, LAU is sending its students to some of the world's best institutions of higher learning, ranging from Paris Institute of Political Studies (Paris) to Freie University (Berlin) to Cornell University (New York). "What impressed me most about Sciences-Po is that the professors ranged from international lawyers to UN peacekeepers, financial analysts and mayors," says Carol Abdul Khalek, who recently returned from a semester studying at the renowned Parisian university. "All that diverse competence is truly beneficial, adding definite value to your learning experience."

Likewise, Laetitia el Khoury, who spent a semester studying at the University of Ottawa (Ontario), found her time there academically stimulating. "The budget, equipment and laboratories they have for social sciences are thrilling," she says, adding that this exposure was particularly beneficial to her as a psychology major.

LAU scholars studying abroad are, moreover, convinced that their experience will last beyond graduation. Amy Melki recently returned from a semester at the Danish School of Media and Journalism. "The exchange program has taught me

valuable lessons that will aid me in my future career as a journalist," she says.

Reflecting on her experience in Paris, Khalek says that her time abroad has definitely raised her employability: "Leaving your family to adapt to a new cultural and academic environment is a sign of rapid adaptability, maturity, independence and dedication, qualities that employers value in applicants."

For their part, international students coming to LAU from abroad are also finding the experience to be transformative. "It gives you perspective," says Rikke Rasmussen. "In Denmark we complain that the state wants to cut money for higher education. Here people have to pay to study at university. It's a completely different world. I don't know if I could be in college if my parents had to pay for me."

Djianni Wahea, originally from New Caledonia and studying at LAU through an exchange partnership with Sciences Po, revels in Lebanon's cultural diversity: "People here communicate in Arabic, English and French. It's wonderful. At times I don't know what language I should speak."

While LAU has signed many significant macro-level agreements with foreign institutions over the years, the role of the university's seven constituent schools in the forging of international exchange partnerships is an integral part of the story. "The OIS's main advantage in the very competitive international education environment is our well-coordinated partnership with the academic schools," says Abdul Rahman. This "guarantees that the service provided for international students and exchange scholars serves and is aligned with the academic objectives of the students during their studies here."

And finally, in addition to academic considerations, it has long been recognized that time spent studying outside one's country widens student's horizons in intangible, sometimes surprising ways. "Living abroad, and especially alone, made me realize that responsibilities can affect how you think and act," says el Khoury. Noureldinne Khalife, currently studying at IESEG School of Management in Paris, agrees: "The experience one receives from living and studying abroad, even if it's for five months, opens the doors to the future and boosts self confidence."

Laetitia el Khoury



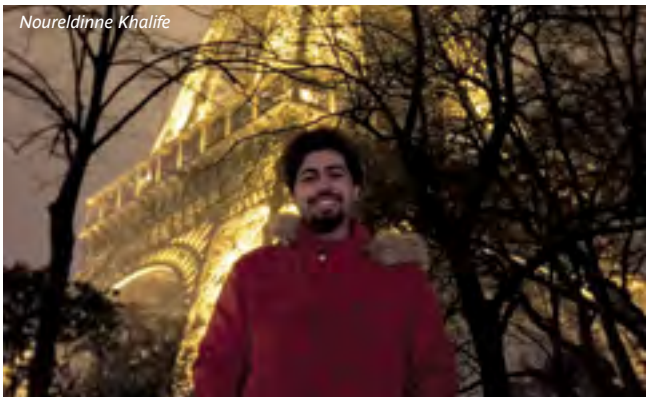
Carol AbdulKhalek



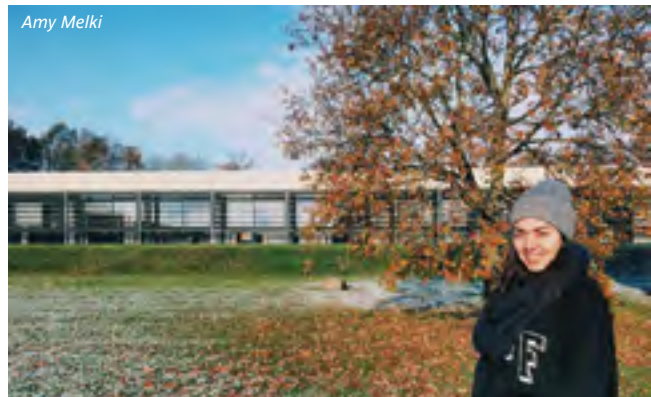
"LAU is committed to engage in putting the world within the reach of its students."

—Dina Abdul Rahman,
international associate program
manager at LAU's Office of
International Services

Noureldinne Khalife



Amy Melki



Alumni update

September 2016



Not Barefoot in the Park

The annual family picnic at Promenade Park in Mississauga, Ontario, organized by the Toronto chapter on Sunday, September 11, drew a mix of alumni from all generations and their families. Over 70 picnickers turned out for the festive event and dined on hot dogs, burgers and kabobs, as well as a wide variety of Lebanese food.

Summer Gathering

The School of Engineering chapter organized its annual summer gathering at Rikky's on Sunday, September 18. More than 150 alumni and friends gathered to enjoy the scrumptious food and vibrant atmosphere.



October 2016



Professional Success

The Bahrain chapter organized a session on "The 4C's of Professional Success" by award-winning speaker and trainer Mohammed Abdulla Isa. The ideas of clarity, commitment, confidence and competence took center stage on Wednesday, October 5 at Trust Re Tower in Bahrain's Diplomatic Area. The session was a great success and attracted around 50 alumni who benefited from this very insightful event.

Parenting Skills

As part of the *Stay Aware* alumni lecture series, the Alumni Relations Office organized a lecture titled "Parenting Skills" by LAU Beirut's Dean of Students Raed Mohsen on Friday, October 21 on the university's Beirut campus. The event attracted a crowd of 150 alumni who hoped to put into practice Mohsen's sound advice.



Trip to Anfeh

The BCW chapter organized a trip to Anfeh on Saturday October 22. Around 25 chapter members and friends embarked on a tour that explored the picturesque village of Anfeh, which is located 65 kilometers north of Beirut and 15 kilometers south of Tripoli. They visited churches and strolled through the streets of the village, ending their trip with lunch at Chez Fouad.

November 2016



Flying the Flag

The Montreal chapter coordinated a joint gathering of alumni from LAU, AUB, USJ and NDU to celebrate Lebanon's Independence Day. The event held at the W Montreal on Thursday, November 24, highlighted the Lebanese's love for their country no matter how far away they are.



New Chapter Launch

The USP chapter was launched on Wednesday, November 2 at the university's Beirut campus. LAU President Joseph G. Jabbra welcomed the new committee members, who in their turn gave a short introduction about themselves and expressed their enthusiasm to be part of an LAU alumni chapter. The launch was followed by a celebratory reception.

Wineries Tour

The Byblos chapter organized a tour of the Bekaa wineries on Wednesday, November 23. The tour was a great opportunity to visit the Bsous museum, sample the wines of Clos St. Thomas, and enjoy lunch at the Cave Kouroum winery.



December 2016

Movie Screening

LAU's School of Arts and Sciences' Communication Arts Department and Alumni Relations Office organized a screening of the award-winning movie *Bil Halal* by Assad Fouladkar on Thursday, December 8 at the Irwin Theatre on the university's Beirut Campus.



Computer Science Gathering

The School of Arts and Sciences in collaboration with the Alumni Relations Office and the Computer Science and Mathematics Department organized the First Computer Science Alumni Gathering on Tuesday, December 6 at the university's Beirut campus. Nashat Mansour, the school's dean, presented the university's computer science program and alumnus Elie Habib '94, cofounder and CTO of Anghami music application spoke of his experience. This was followed by a reception. The event drew a crowd of more than 120 computer science graduates, who enjoyed the reunion as it not only brought back memories but also revived old friendships.

Winter Gathering

The School of Engineering chapter organized its annual Winter Gathering on Saturday, December 17 at Italian Project restaurant in Beirut's vibrant Mar Mikhail. The event gathered more than 120 alumni and friends.



Alumni update



Budding Startups

Speed@BDD held its third Demo Day on Tuesday, December 20 at the LAU Beirut campus in collaboration with the university's Alumni Relations Office. Five startups pitched their businesses and showcased their products in the presence of more than 250 investors, officials, students and media representatives.

Annual Christmas Dinner

The Bahrain chapter organized its Annual Christmas Dinner on Friday, December 9 at the Señor Pacos Mexican Restaurant. As in previous years, the annual festive event gathered an enthusiastic crowd to celebrate the spirit of Christmas together.



January 2017

Alumni Lecture

As part of the *Keep Learning* alumni lecture series, the Alumni Relations Office organized a lecture titled "Thinking Life" by Johnny el Ghouli on Friday, January 13 at LAU's Beirut campus. The event attracted a crowd of 170 enthusiastic alumni.



A Game Changer

On Friday, January 27, LAU New York Academic Center's staff and the committee members of the university's NY-NJ alumni chapter welcomed Hassan Jebai to the Big Apple. As the winner of the Joseph Audi Study Abroad Scholarship, Jebai will spend the semester studying in New York taking courses related to his major, economics, at Baruch College in Manhattan.

February 2017



Planting Seeds of Hope

On February 10, 11 and 12, more than 1,400 people came to LAU Beirut to attend *Sanaghrisouha*, the fruit of this year's collaboration between the Beirut chapter, the NGO Shifaa, and the university's Associate Professor of Theater Lina Abiad. This is the fourth annual project carried out jointly by the NGO and the alumni group. As in previous years, the proceeds will go to cover scholarships at LAU, as well as blood donations and pediatric surgeries for needy families.

Celebrating the Oscars

On Sunday, February 26, the Houston chapter celebrated "Oscar Night" at Simone on Sunset watching the Academy Awards and socializing over drinks and good food.





New Alumni Chapter

A new alumni chapter was established in Dallas, Texas. This is the 15th LAU Alumni chapter in North America and the second in Texas. This new chapter held its first official gathering on Friday, February 24, to discuss networking opportunities and future activities over dinner at the Cadot Restaurant.

Comedy show

The BCW chapter organized a performance of the Chady & Gaby comedy show on Monday, February 20, at the Irwin Theater on LAU's Beirut campus. Needless to say everybody left in a joyful mood after having had a great laugh.



A Warm Welcome

The NY-NJ chapter committee — together with Ed Shiner, director of Alumni and Special Projects in North America — organized a dinner on Monday, February 20, welcoming Associate Director of Alumni Ghada Majed to New York.

Later that week, on Friday, February 24, the Seattle chapter committee organized another dinner to welcome Majed to Seattle. Both events were a great opportunity to touch base on university and alumni issues with the chapters.



For a Good Cause

The Toronto chapter held its annual Dinner on Saturday, February 4 at the Mazza Garden Restaurant. A large group of alumni and friends enjoyed delicious food, great music and lots of dancing! The chapter presented a \$4,000 check to LAU's scholarship program.



Joining the Club

The Alumni Relations Office and the Dubai & Northern Emirates chapter organized a reception for alumni residing in Dubai to connect new alumni with the chapter there. The event, which took place in the presence of LAU President Joseph G. Jabbara on Monday, February 20, at the Al Naseem Jumeirah Hotel, gathered over 120 alumni.

Celebrating

The Abu Dhabi Alumni chapter celebrated its 24th Annual Ball, under the theme Business Studies, at the Beach Rotana Hotel on Thursday, February 23, during which Sami Abi Esber, president of MDS Gulf Group, Andre Sayegh, CEO of First Gulf Bank, and Christian Oussi, Special Advisor to the President of LAU on Media Relations, were honored. This year, the guest of honor was Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Culture, Youth and Social Development, who praised the "important and impressive role LAU is playing in serving Lebanon and the region." Over 500 alumni and guests including the Dean of the Adnan Kassar School of Business Said Ladki, who gave a presentation about the school's latest achievements, attended the event. Lebanese singers Joseph Atiyeh and Manel Mallat kept the crowd well entertained.



SAVE THE DATE



LAU Alumni & Reunions 2017

July 11 Alumni Dinner July 13 Byblos Reunion July 14 Beirut Reunion July 15 Alumni Branch July 16 Alumni Trip

Program to follow

Staying connected

Helen Travis, who attended the then-BCW from 1972-1973, lives in Long Island, New York. Now an accounting clerk, she used to be an assistant human resources manager. Helen's nephew, **Martin Mugharbil (B.S. '99)**, is an LAU alumnus.

Cecil Tabbara (B.S. '71, M.S. '73) obtained his Ph.D. in microbiology from Washington State University. He currently lives in Bahrain, where he is the vice-president at the Arabian Gulf University. Cecil is married to **Zahra AlJubeyli (M.S. '74)**

Leila Assaf (A.A.S. '78) lives in Washington, D.C., where she is currently retired. She previously worked at AMIDEAST and at the World Bank. Leila has been living in the U.S. since 1987 and keep herself busy with volunteering and artwork.

Talal el Khalil (A.A.S. '82, R.C.D. '83) obtained his M.B.A. from Columbia University in New York. He currently lives in Dubai, where he is the senior vice-president and general manager for the Middle East, GCC and North Africa at PepsiCo. Talal is the proud father of Mira el Khalil (a student at LAU during the academic year 2013/14), who has joined the work force as the assistant brand manager for Michael Kors Fashion in Dubai.

Samer el Safah (A.A.S. '88) lives in Beirut, where he is the general manager of the Makhzoumi Foundation.

Rami T. Khdor (B.S. '88) obtained his master's in microbiology from Mid Essex University in the U.K. and his Ph.D. in food microbiology with distinction from California State University. He currently lives in Lebanon, where he is the owner of a chain of accredited labs under the banner of RBML labs. His twin boys are both at LAU: one is a biology pre-med and the other is a business management student.

Tharwat Zantout (B.A. '93) obtained her postgraduate degree in banking finance from AUL. She lives in Beirut, where she is the personal assistant to the general manager at the Arab Bank. She is married and has two children, a girl and a boy.

Rita Saliba (B.A. '95) obtained her M.Sc. in environmental design with emphasis on set-up and project management from



Helen Travis



Houssam Lababidi



Rana Shehadi



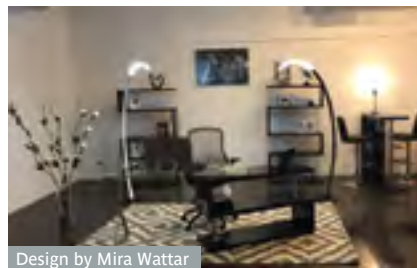
Karina Indus



Leila Assaf



Talal el Khalil



Design by Mira Wattar



Design by Bassima Houjeij

the University of Montreal. She currently lives in Greater Montreal, where she works as a design and project management consultant. Rita worked as an interior designer in Lebanon, where she also taught art for several years prior to emigrating to Canada. She is married to Omar Nasr and they have twins, Yan and Yara.

Karim Azar (B.Arch. '97) lives in Lebanon, where he is the principal of Lycée de Ville in Adonis, Zouk Mosbeh.

Rania el Khoury (A.A.S. '97) obtained her B.A. in Graphic Design from NDU and a master's in graphic design and visual communication from the Lebanese University. She lives in Lebanon, where she works as an instructor at two universities. Previously she was the art director of an e-marketing company in parallel to freelance projects. She is married to alumnus **Antoine Wakim (B.S. '91, M.S. '94)** and they have three children.

Ninar Keyrouz (B.A. '99) obtained certificates in integrated communications from NYU and producing and directing from the Hollywood Film Institute in New York. Ninar currently lives in Washington, D.C., where she is the director of marketing and media communications at In Defense of Christians (IDC). She co-produced the documentary *Our Last Stand* filmed on location in Syria and Iraq, which tells the story of persecuted Christians there.

May Koleilat (M.B.A. '99) lives in Beirut, where she is a training and capacity development manager at DAI Lebanon. She was previously the administrative consultant on a World Bank/CDR funded project, prior to which she held the posts of commercial accounts manager, project manager, data base administrator, senior systems analyst and programmer at MEA. May has two daughters, **Lina Farchoukh (Pharm.D. '02)** and Lama, who graduated as an M.D. from AUB.



Ninar Keyrouz



Karim Azar



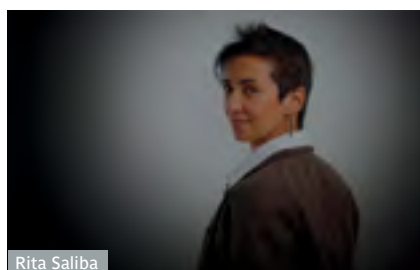
Lina Mahmassani



Alain Maalouf



Hadi al Souki



Rita Saliba



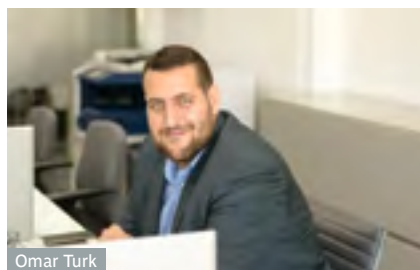
Pascale el Khoury



Joelle el Sawalhi



Louay Ghaziri



Omar Turk

Yara Youssef (B.A. '99) obtained her master's in international relations from the University of Arkansas. She currently lives in Washington, D.C., where she is the senior strategic communications officer at the Center for Global Health Engagement of the Uniformed Services University. Previously she held the post of senior communications advisor at USAID Global Health. Yara got married in 2010 and has a two-year-old daughter named Joanna.

Georgina Ibrahim (M.B.A. '03) lives in Lebanon, where she is the managing director at Besst sarl. Georgina has also successfully launched www.trainingdirectory-mena.com, the first platform of its kind in the region that allows all business parties in the training industry to promote their profiles and services for increased online exposure and better business opportunities.

Celine Atwi (B.S. '07) obtained her

master's in fashion, design and luxury management with distinction from the Grenoble École de Management in France. Celine currently lives in Beirut, where she is a part-time lecturer in visual communication at the Lebanese University, as well as an entrepreneur in e-commerce.

Bechir Hasbani (B.E. '08) lives in Lebanon, where he is the senior electrical/electro-mechanical engineer and project manager working in the Inspection and Technical Control department at APAVE Liban.

Fadi Nofal (B.S. '00, B.A. '06, & M.B.A. '08) lives in Jeddah, where he works as a marketing specialist and interior architect. Fadi previously interned at Dar el Handasah for interior architecture and Ceramica Cleopatra-Egypt for marketing.

Omar Turk (B.S. '08) obtained his M.B.A. and M.Sc. in international business in

Canada and the U.K. respectively. He currently lives in Dubai, where he is the human resources manager at Diebold Nixdorf for Middle East and Africa. Omar is married and has two children.

Yasmin Agha (B.A. '09) lives in Lebanon and is the founder and owner of Cookie Dough, which she established in 2009. In addition to offering luxury goods and services for little ones from 0-12 years, Cookie Dough runs workshops for parents. Yasmin married LAU graduate Hassan Charafeddine (B.S. '08) in September 2016.

Zena Bawab (B.S. '06, M.B.A. '09) is still working in the family business importing and exporting tires, batteries and lubricants (Rafic Bawab & Co.). The company has recently expanded to include "Tires & More," a new retail boutique chain. All LAU alumni and students will be given a 25 percent discount upon showing their ID. Zena is engaged to Khaled Chehab.

Staying connected

Jasmina Khalaf (B.S. '09) obtained her master's in management from the École Supérieure des Affaires. She lives in Beirut, where she works in digital communication and marketing at BLC Bank.

Houssam Lababidi (B.S. '09) lives in Genève, where he is currently studying for a master's in management specializing in quantitative marketing at the Université de Genève. Houssam was previously an account manager at M&C SAATCHI (Beirut) for six years.

Dania Shallah Kaakani (B.A. '93, M.B.A. '09) lives in Beirut, where she is the division head of human resources of BankMed. During the past two years, Dania has been the keynote speaker on human resources at several Union of Arab Banks conferences. She is married to Abdul Rahman Kaakani and they have two children. Their daughter is a graphic design student at LAU, while their son is studying architecture at AUB.

Rana Shehadi (B.A. '09) lives in Lebanon, where she works as a food security and livelihood officer at Save the Children International. Rana was promoted in July 2016 and loves her job. She has two daughters, Taline and Julia, and is enjoying every second of their development.

Hadi al Souki (M.B.A. '13) lives in Dubai, where he is a learning and development specialist at the Chalhoub Group.

Ghada Merhi Bleik (M.A. '13) lives in Beirut, where she teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) at City International School. Ghada says, "My experience at LAU was literally life changing. I came in as one person and came out as another. I have become a long life learner thanks to LAU." She has two children, Said who is eight and Celina who is three.

Karina Indus (B.S. '13) lives in Beirut, where she is pursuing an M.B.A. at LAU. Karina works as an academic assistant at the university.

Mira Wattar (B.S. '13) lives in California, where she is the director of marketing at Hyundai Technology. On the side, Mira is opening a high tech home automation solution showroom called TechSpace Zone and has recently started exploring consulting as an interior design home

automation provider. She has also been hired to do long term marketing for two branches of Sizzler's restaurants in California.

Rawad Hijazi (B.S. '14) obtained a master's of international business at Hult International Business School in Boston. Rawad lives in Jacksonville, Florida, where he works as a Business Systems Analyst at Crowley Maritime. He is currently responsible for the process development and implementation of new terminal operating systems in San Juan, Puerto Rico and Jacksonville, Florida.

Alain Maalouf (B.S. '14) started his CFA designation after graduation. He passed level 1 and is a candidate for level 2. He also obtained his certificate in wealth and investment management and in applied financial advice and management. Alain lives in Dubai, where he is a corporate investment-banking analyst at the Standard Chartered Bank. He believes that the internships (Ernst & Young, CitiBank, Bank Byblos and Bank of Beirut) he undertook while at LAU were of great value to his career.

Nour Boutros (B.S. '15) lives in Dubai, where she is a recruitment consultant. Nour believes her promotion at one of the leading recruitment agencies in UAE within less than a year is due to hard work and a solid educational background.

Jaymi Lynn el Chidiac (B.S. '15) obtained her master's in interior design from the Florence Design Academy. Jaymi currently lives in Lebanon where she practices interior design at Chidiac Real Estate. She has enrolled to do a Ph.D. in design psychology.

Pascale el Khoury (B.S. '15) lives in Lebanon, where she is working as a community manager and content creator at AddBloom after having been an intern there.

Naim Ghamlouché (B.S. '15) lives in Beirut, where he works as an Oracle product consultant at PrimeWare, an ITG Company. Naim was an Oracle technical developer at Widestreams for 18 months before switching to consulting.

Louay Ghaziri (B.Arch. '15) obtained his M.Sc. in building construction & facility

management from the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, U.S.A. Louay currently lives in New Jersey, where he works in construction management at DPR Construction. He previously worked at Turner Construction in Atlanta.

Bassima Houjeij (B.Arch. '15) lives in Beirut, where she practices as an architect and consultant. Bassima founded her own company, Arcadia World for Architecture and Design. She got engaged last September.

Gaelle Saker (B.S. '15) obtained her master's in finance from AUB. She is currently working as a junior accountant at Risk Management Group.

Zainab Atia (B.S. '16) lives in Lebanon and previously worked as an administrative assistant and activities coordinator at Arabian Construction Company (ACC). Her sister, an LAU graduate just graduated from the University of Manchester with a master's in peace and conflicts studies.

Hussein Basma (B.E. '16) lives in Paris where he is currently pursuing a master's degree in automotive engineering at IFP (École Nationale Supérieure du Pétrole et des Moteurs).

Rania Daoud (M.A. '16) lives in Lebanon, where she currently works as an educational consultant, having previously been a special educator.

Joelle el Sawalhi (B.A. '16) lives in Washington, D.C, where she is currently pursuing a master's degree in Foreign Service at Georgetown University. She previously worked at the protocol department of the Prime Minister's office in Beirut, the Paris and New York Lebanese diplomatic missions, and The Hague and Geneva United Nations duty stations.

Lea Jeha (B.S. '16) lives in Lebanon, where she works as a wedding and events coordinator.

Lina Mahmassani (B.A. & T.D. '12, M.A. '16) lives in Lebanon and has been teaching Arabic at a primary year program (PYP) school for the last five years. She strongly believes that the Arabic language is a magical tool able reach the hearts of those who study it. Lina is married to Mazen Saadeh.



Fostering knowledge

By Leena Saidi

LAU alumna cements learning ties with her alma mater



"My solid educational background from LAU has allowed me to confidently take on new challenges."



It is common to find that students from Dar Jana International School in Jeddah have gone on to join LAU's student body. This is not by chance, but rather through the concerted efforts of LAU alumna and the school's headmistress, Fatin Ataya. "LAU offered me quality education and it offers our students the same," says Ataya of her alma mater. "Carrying a degree from LAU helps open doors for careers in numerous fields of study and industry, on both a regional and global scale," she adds.

"My father constantly stressed the importance of female education as a valuable weapon for success," Ataya explains, adding that she chose LAU because of its "high standard of education." In 1968 she joined the university to major in social work, as she felt it gave her the opportunity to interact with people with different profiles and backgrounds. "It instilled a sense of awareness and responsibility toward others," she says.

The outbreak of the civil war in Lebanon put an end to her plans to pursue a master's degree in the field. Ataya's family left Lebanon for Egypt believing that the war would end in a few weeks and they would return to Beirut. However, it did not, and in 1976 they relocated to Jeddah, KSA, where her eldest brother was working. It was there that she was hired by a private school where she stayed for the next 17 years, becoming its principal. "It brought great satisfaction to be able to impact students' lives and see them succeed," she says. "I felt a sense of responsibility toward the students, as their success mirrored that of the school."

In 1999, she was asked to take the reins at the newly-established Dar Jana International School. "Knowing that I have a solid educational background from LAU

allowed me to confidently take on new challenges and meet my aspirations," she stresses. "I was motivated by the positive impact and difference I believed we could make."

Dar Jana International School started with 23 students, five employees, and a humble building. Since then, it has successfully grown to about 6,000 students covering 50 nationalities, across three fully-equipped campuses supported by a professional team of teachers and administrators who are continuously developing through teaching and training programs with reputable educational institutes.

With the surge of international schools in Jeddah at that time, competition was fierce. "We had to find creative ways to make Dar Jana stand out," says Ataya, "We planned for sustainable growth and focused on delivering quality services with a healthy teacher-to-student ratio."

Fortunately, Ataya had kept in contact with LAU's Department of Education, especially with Rima Bahous — associate professor and the director of the university's Center for Program and Learning Assessment and the Teacher Training Institute — and Mona Nabhani, who was her classmate and is currently an associate professor and the chair of the department. "We organized several customized training session for Dar Jana's employees in topics including classroom management, special education and teaching techniques," she explains. "I also regularly attended conferences held at LAU."

"LAU has accompanied me ever since I stepped onto its campus...it never failed me," says Ataya, "I am proud of being an LAU graduate."

WHY I GIVE BACK

Leona Mattoni
(Faculty Member '62 – '64)



Leona Mattoni, a microbiologist by academic training, has retired after serving for 16 years as chief administrator of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Brain Mapping Center. Mattoni is a former science faculty member of LAU, teaching from January 1962 to June 1964, years during which the university was known as the Beirut College for Women (BCW).

How did you end up teaching at BCW?

I was living in Colorado with my then-husband, who was very interested in living and teaching abroad. He applied to the Chemistry Department at AUB, but there was no opening, so we made plans to go on a Fulbright to Peru. Then, out of the blue, a letter came from AUB saying they had a position. Once we arrived in Beirut, I got a job at BCW as a biology and plant physiology teacher. I taught there for five semesters and loved every minute of it.

What did you enjoy about teaching at BCW?

I loved the international flavor of the student body. I had grown up in rural Colorado in a rather closed society, so Beirut was incredibly exciting for me. I had students from Iraq, Jordan and Armenia. We also had one girl from Saudi Arabia, a couple from Pakistan, one Dutch and a lot of Ethiopian students.

Do you have any special memories of BCW that stand out?

I have so many! My husband and I used to take students on hikes on the weekends in the Barouk Cedar forest. There was so much natural beauty and such a diversity of people. I also used to take the girls horseback riding. I remember when one time we had a mock Lebanese village wedding on campus. The bride came in on a donkey, and we had traditional food and dancing. It was fantastic. I remember too the May Day celebrations, which entailed a May pole, dancing, and a May queen.

How did the experience affect you?

It was a turning point in my life, because I learned that not everyone thinks the same way. My experience living in Lebanon and working at BCW also gave me deep appreciation for the profound role played by the family in Middle Eastern culture.

Why do you give back to LAU?

One reason is personal: My giving is an expression of my love for the people and the institution that had a deeply formative influence on me. I also give because I believe profoundly in the power of education to reverberate through society. The individuals educated at LAU carry their knowledge, skills and ideas into their communities and nations. They are our great hope for improving the quality of many lives and fostering positive change.

CREATING A LASTING LEGACY



✧ ANTOUN SEHNAOUI ✧

A dedicated supporter of LAU for several years, Antoun Sehnaoui has given to LAU both personally as well as professionally through Société Générale de Banque au Liban (SGBL), of which he serves as the chairman and CEO.

His desire to give back comes from a deep-rooted philanthropic vision and interest in cultural and athletic projects, which he has channeled toward LAU by establishing and supporting a designated scholarship grant in his name, sponsoring events, and contributing significant resources to found a major sports facility at LAU's Byblos Campus. Once complete, the Antoun Nabil Sehnaoui-SGBL Bank Athletic Center will be fully equipped to cater to students' extracurricular and athletic needs. It will include a number of courts and multipurpose rooms as well as a swimming pool.

Sehnaoui and SGBL continue to give toward LAU. Most recently this has come in the form of another generous gift in support of the namesake athletic center under construction, ensuring that the university has the resources to make it a monumental facility.



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