

LAU magazine

VOLUME 20 | issue n° 1 | Spring 2018

& ALUMNI BULLETIN



Living in Lebanon

The cover of this edition of *LAU Magazine and Alumni Bulletin* was created by fourth-year graphic design major Jamie Sue Melki.

Melki submitted her design to the Magazine Cover Contest, launched by the Marketing and Communications Department to increase student participation in the production of the magazine.

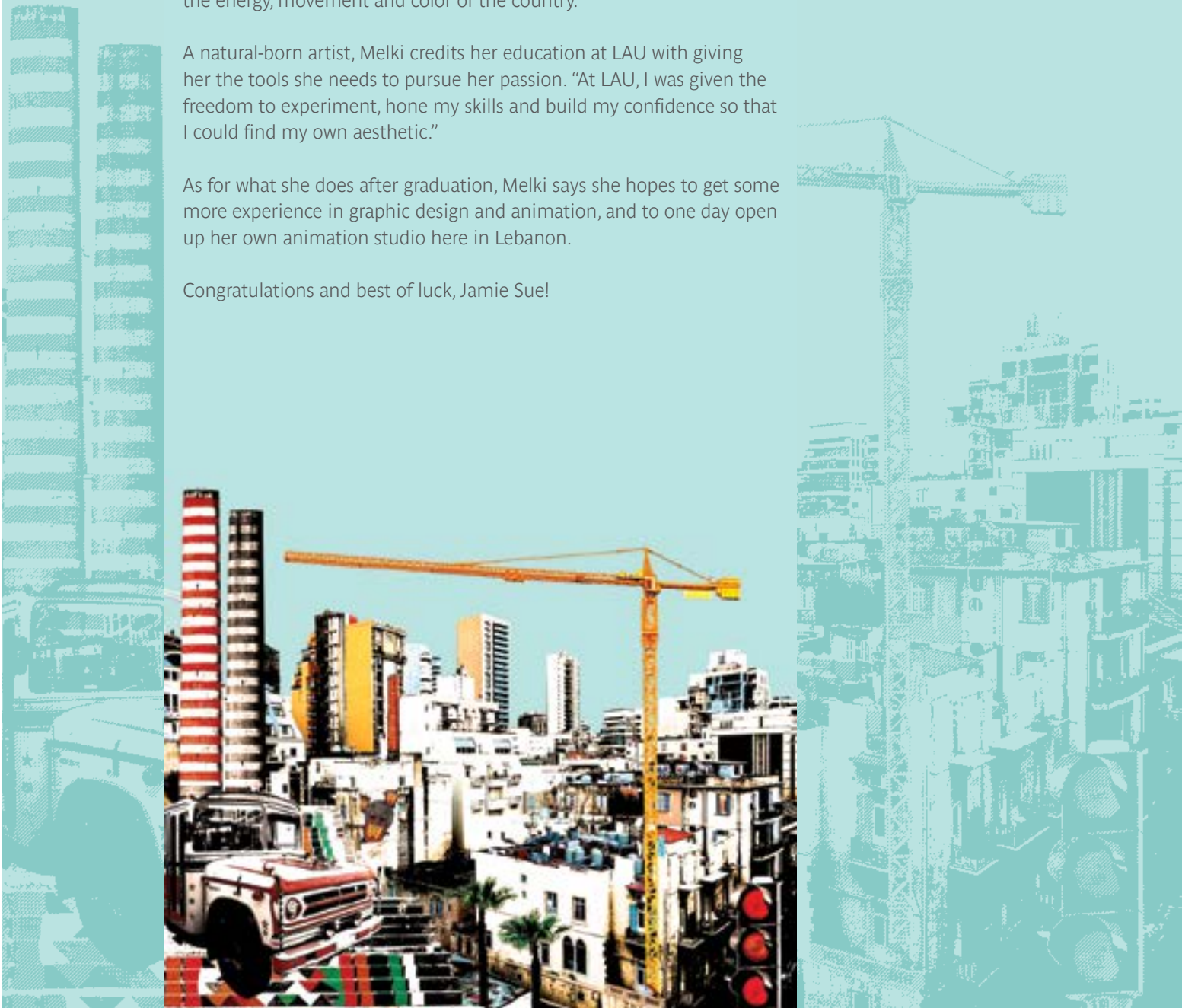
With her image, Melki says she wanted to refute the idea of a stalled country, and rather focus on one that is full of life, movement, and, yes, chaos. "I wanted to counter the claim that Lebanon is dying," said Melki of her design. "We're a resilient people, and chaos gives us strength."

She used the platform Photoshop to create a collage of images she took in and around Beirut, her hometown. She hopes her work invokes the energy, movement and color of the country.

A natural-born artist, Melki credits her education at LAU with giving her the tools she needs to pursue her passion. "At LAU, I was given the freedom to experiment, hone my skills and build my confidence so that I could find my own aesthetic."

As for what she does after graduation, Melki says she hopes to get some more experience in graphic design and animation, and to one day open up her own animation studio here in Lebanon.

Congratulations and best of luck, Jamie Sue!





Living in Lebanon

FEATURES

10



Coming Home

Lebanon loses thousands of its best and brightest every year. But what often gets overlooked is the power of strong institutions – such as LAU – to draw back the country's native talent. Even though many of the university's faculty and staff have had opportunities for a successful life and career outside of Lebanon, a large number have chosen to return.

22 Protecting Lives in Lebanon

The Lebanese Red Cross is probably the most publicly visible national society in Lebanon, with several dozen stations and thousands of volunteers throughout the country. Yet few outsiders are aware of the partnership between the organization and the Lebanese American University, which has been meaningfully improving LRC's capacity to carry out its mission.



42



A New Rent Law, A New Urban Dynamic

Following the end of rent control in 1992, a schism grew between those who pay "old rent" and new – those whose rent would never increase and those who would be at the mercy of the real-estate market. Now, with increasing demand for affordable housing and the "liberation" of old-rent contracts, experts are calling on the government to pass legislation to protect against property demolition, over-development and gentrification.

CONTENTS

- 3 From the President's Desk
- 4 A Passion for Helping Others
- 5 Honoring the Giants of Medicine
- 6 Student Scientists Shine at CERN
- 8 Into the War
- 12 DNA of the Ancient Mariners
- 14 Cross-Town Traffic
- 15 Understanding Gender in the Quran
- 16 Khalil Gibran – From Lebanon to the World
- 18 The Heart of Lebanon Guest Poem
- 19 Is Lebanon Ready for the Youth's Vote?
- 20 Helping People Live their Best Lives
- 26 What's New at LAU
- 27 Postcard From New York
- 28 Editorial: A Spark of Hope
- 29 Op-Ed: The Real Beauty of Lebanon
- 30 A Lifetime at LAU
- 31 In Memory of Mona Chemali Khalaf
- 32 Why I Chose Lebanon
- 34 Outpatients, Welcome In
- 36 Success in High Doses
- 38 Spreading Knowledge, Strengthening Organizations
- 40 Community By Design
- 41 Tapping Lebanon's Oil and Gas Riches
- 46 Room with a Future
- 47 Going "Soft"
- 48 Campus Notes
- 53 Success and Giving Back-Interview with Wissam Moukahal
- 54 Alumni Update
- 56 Staying Connected
- 58 A Humanitarian and Doctor in the Making
- 59 A \$1.5 Million Gift Toward Excellence in Engineering Education
- 60 Why I Give Back

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.

Submit to: marcom@lau.edu.lb, or

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New York, NY 10017, USA

LAU Magazine & Alumni Bulletin goes environmentally friendlier!

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LAU Magazine & Alumni Bulletin is published every semester by the Marketing and Communications Department (MarCom) at LAU and is distributed free of charge to alumni, students, staff, faculty, friends and supporters worldwide.

Direct comments and letters to the editor may be sent to: marcom@lau.edu.lb.

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From the President's Desk

Dear friends,

What draws people to Lebanon?

What is it that leads millions of people across the world to come and visit our little country? What is it that causes our emigrants to flock home in multitudes every summer? Why are we consistently viewed as a shimmering gem in a turbulent region?

In short, what is it that sets Lebanon apart? Is it our country's famous natural beauty? Is it our lively culture, our incredible history, our joie de vivre? It is all of these, of course – and more – that make Lebanon so unique. And that is what LAU strives to embody and honor every day.

In this issue of LAU Magazine and Alumni Bulletin we explore living in Lebanon and what makes it so exceptional, so endearing and so exciting that people choose to come and stay, in spite of the challenges we often endure.

From our majestic historical buildings to our lively arts scene, from our proud food culture to our bounty of educated and sophisticated professionals, Lebanon offers residents and visitors alike a chance to experience the crossroads of continents with a distinctive twist.

We here at LAU have always tried to do service to our great country by fulfilling our role as a leading institution. We aim to represent Lebanon's many cultures and histories, to welcome learners from all backgrounds, and to produce cutting-edge research that helps shape scholarship across the world.

Through partnerships with governmental organizations, the private sector, leading institutions and international bodies, we expand our reach and solidify our standing. We publish in flagship journals and lead innovations across numerous fields. We are one of the first to embrace new techniques and systems. We blaze trails academically and socially. And we leave nobody out. Indeed, we canvass the globe to recruit the best faculty, we help deserving students and those in need of financial assistance, and we do our best to serve our community. After all, it is our faculty, students and communities that help us shine as a beacon of progress and stability in our proud nation.

In the past few months, LAU has signed several memoranda of understanding with the Lebanese Security Forces to give personnel access to educational materials that will help them excel personally and professionally. We have worked with non-governmental agencies such as the Red Cross to increase efficiency and thus save lives. We have held charity events, organized fundraisers, and conducted community outreach to give back. Our alumni continue to make strides in their fields both here and abroad. And throughout it all, we are forever raising the bar on academic performance and output.

In this issue, we explore why LAU is such an important presence in Lebanon, how we uphold the community and respect the country we call home. In line with our move to involve students in the production of our communications, this issue includes an editorial and an op-ed written by Communication Arts students expressing their views of the country, what makes it special, and LAU's place in it. We also benefited from student talent with our guest poem and the cover image used for this edition of the magazine, the result of outreach from our editorial team to find fresh outlooks from our campus.

So read on to learn more about the ways that we at LAU work together to ensure our university best represents the energy, dynamism and passion of our country.



Joseph G. Jabbra

President

A Passion for Helping Others

By Hanan Nasser

"Social work is about us making a change in the community and in individuals. It is about knowing yourself as well."

Changing the world, one community at a time. LAU's BA in Social Work and Community Development prepares students to do just that, by assisting families, individuals and groups with social, interpersonal, financial and medical issues that threaten their livelihood or wellbeing.

"Some people feel they have a calling to help people change things for the better," said visiting Assistant Professor of Social Work Michele Kelly. "That's how we get a lot of our students."

One of the oldest such programs in Lebanon, LAU's Social Work degree places an emphasis on community development. Students have the opportunity to work directly with clients – individuals or larger groups – in need, connect them with social programs, and make sure they get the necessary follow up.

Yet, while there is a great demand for such services across in Lebanon, Kelly says there is a shortage of social workers, possibly because people only have a vague notion of what the profession entails.

But for Petra Rafei Chamaa, it was clear she wanted to pursue this field of study from the start. "I was looking through the majors, and I found that social work would best fit my personality because it involved developing the community and changing it for the better," she said.

on broader-scale aspects of the work, such as welfare policy, international social work, societal movements, and community development.

Chamaa said that what she likes about social work is its focus on change from within. "You use your skills as a person – literally your humanity and empathy – to work with people, make them feel better and empower them to make decisions that help them," she said.

She chose Roumieh Prison as the site of her fieldwork because she wanted to understand "why people do what they do." But above all, Chamaa wanted to understand the needs of the prisoners themselves. "At the end of the day they are still humans with needs, and I'd like to know how I can help them."

For Ibrahim Fanous, who is minoring in Social Work, choosing the field was one step toward shifting stereotypes surrounding it.

"I wanted to do social work from the beginning, but living in an Arab household they would say that social work is only for girls. So I wanted to break that barrier," he said. His parents eventually accepted his choice because "they saw how passionate I am about it. Ever since I was a kid I loved social work."

"Social work is about us making a change in the community. It is about knowing yourself as well," he added.

Fanous has already been accepted for a job with the United Nations after completing a three-month internship. He also plans to pursue a master's in Social Work in the future.

Fanous is not in an unusual case. "Every single one of our graduating students has gotten a job," Kelly said.

Social work graduates are regularly employed at hospitals, nursing homes, substance-abuse centers, child-protection offices, mental-health facilities, and private and government agencies. "You will never be bored in your job," added Kelly. "You are there with other passionate and really committed people. It is a job you can do anywhere in the world."

As for Chamaa, she has two projects in mind for when she graduates.

"Eventually I want to work with firefighters on their needs after they experience trauma," said Chamaa, who is a volunteer with the Lebanese Civil Defense. Her other project? She wants to train homeless dogs to become service animals.



"Since I was child I liked helping people, volunteering. I had a plan to change the world. It is still my plan," she added.

Students in the program are required to do two semesters of fieldwork during which they work with NGOs or directly with individuals or groups. They also focus

Honoring the Giants of Medicine

By Dana K. Haffar

Among Lebanon's most valuable resources are its medical professionals. And LAU acts as a crucible of the country's best and brightest in the field.

In that spirit, the Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine hosted a ceremony celebrating the work of clinicians, teachers and innovators affiliated with LAU who have made their mark on the field of medicine.

Dr. Fouad Atik, Dr. Emile Brihi, Dr. Joe Hatem, Dr. Raymond Rizk, Dr. Elie Karamé, Dr. Zeina Saba and Dr. Assaad Rizk.

The latter, president and director general of the Rizk Clinic for 48 years, gave a speech on the field of medicine and how it has changed since he began his career. "It is clear that the great progress made in all fields of medicine over two generations has served the patients of the current generation well," said Dr. Rizk.

Mawad reiterated the mission of the School of Medicine to provide "competent, conscientious and ethical doctors for the community," and the important role clinical care plays in shaping the doctors of the future. He referred to the assembled clinicians as "the epitome of commitment in teaching and providing care."

That sentiment was echoed by Dr. Georges Ghanem, whose advancement to the position of clinical professor of Internal Medicine was celebrated at the event.

Ghanem, who is the first cardiologist in Lebanon to perform a MitraClip procedure without open-heart surgery, said, "The university provides students with the ability to master science and technique, and the hospital allows for a supportive real-world learning environment, and that's where physicians will flourish."

The ceremony also honored Dr. Vanda Abi Raad and her team at the Clinical Simulation Center (LAU-CSC), which was accredited by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Newly appointed as the assistant dean for Continuing Medical Education, Abi Raad highlighted the opportunities provided by LAU-CSC. "Education doesn't stop at the level of resident," she said. "The Simulation Center supports and encourages ongoing training of students and faculty from the schools of medicine, nursing, pharmacy as well as the hospital's clinicians."

The ceremony was preceded by a retreat — the first of its kind — that brought together core university teaching faculty with full-time physicians to create a single unified vision for patient care.



The School of Medicine honors its physicians and celebrates the Clinical Simulation Center's international accreditation

"We are here to honor and recognize the physicians who have contributed tremendously to the various fields of medicine over the last half century. They continue to stand tall among us," said Dean of the School of Medicine Dr. Michel Mawad of those receiving lifetime achievement awards. "These giants all have a common background, having started their careers at Rizk Hospital. They are superior in their competencies and have demonstrated exceptional diligence and perseverance."

A total of 10 physicians and clinicians were honored, among them Dr. Zahi Hakim, a pioneer in radiology; LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital Nephrologist Dr. Antoine Stephan, who has dedicated his career to advancing organ and tissue donation and transplantation in the country; and Dr. Antoine Ghossain, professor of General Surgery, to whom Dr. Mawad paid special tribute as his former student. "Teaching new physicians holds a higher level of responsibility than any other in my opinion, and it is trickier to accomplish," Mawad said. Other giants honored were

"It is clear that the great progress made in all fields of medicine over two generations has served the patients of the current generation well."

Student Scientists Shine at CERN

By Louisa Ajami

A partnership between LAU and the European Organization for Nuclear Research is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students

Despite the fact that it deals with complex research in physics and engineering, the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) is an object of fascination.

Though CERN was established in the wake of World War II, it was in 2008 – when scientists inaugurated the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) for the first time by steering a beam of protons around the 27-kilometer machine – that people across the world really started following the organization and its work.

Here in the Middle East, scientists from across a number of disciplines have been involved in CERN's research. At LAU, such work has become formalized, with a series of collaborative projects between the School of Engineering (SOE) and the Switzerland-based organization. These projects bring leading LAU students and faculty together with the world-renowned scientists at CERN, providing a chance to make new, groundbreaking discoveries, and advance the level of expertise hosted here at LAU.

"It is a privilege to be engaged with one of the largest research institutes in the world," said Barbar Akle, associate professor and assistant dean at the SOE. "Several undergraduate and graduate

students are engaged with research projects, and some are visiting CERN to work in the most advanced scientific labs in the world. These are life-changing experiences for them."

In the first joint project, a research team at LAU was formed to design and build a magnetic-field-resistant robot that will be able to autonomously monitor progress and safety during a highly complex Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) experiment that will take place at CERN's labs in Geneva. Akle is leading the project with five students from the SOE. Two of them, Tony Najjar and Ibrahim Ibrahim, traveled to CERN for two months to support research on the project.

Ibrahim and Najjar got to work side-by-side with other top international students as well as leading scientists. "I got to know students from all over the world," said Ibrahim. "I experienced everyday life in a community of the scientific elite."

Najjar agreed: "I've met engineers, physicists, computer scientists and brilliant students from all over the world. The cultural mix I was part of was immeasurably valuable for me, and the things I learned from the other scientists can be found nowhere else."



“Associating LAU with one of the largest research institutes in the world will bring us international visibility needed to foster strong research collaborations.”

In the second LAU-CERN project, Assistant Professor of Computer Engineering Joe Tekli and student Houssein El Sayed are developing tools to monitor particle accelerator pedestals, which will allow scientists to easily view, monitor and track trends and changes in measurements. Students working on these projects in the future will have the chance to travel to CERN, as El Sayed did in January. “Houssein is getting the chance to work and collaborate with professionals in one of the most prestigious and respected scientific institutions in the world,” said Tekli. “This will certainly allow him to gain professional and social skills that will be invaluable for him in any career he wishes to pursue later on.”

LAU is additionally exploring the possibility of co-advising graduate-level computing projects that solve problems faced at CERN/CMS.

On the computing side, Engineering student David Kors is spending a yearlong internship at CERN, during which he is coordinating the creation of a computing cluster that will be hosted at the OGERO headquarters in Beirut. The cluster will be used by science and engineering researchers, including those

at the Lebanese University (a CMS-collaborating institute), the American University of Beirut, Université Saint-Joseph, and LAU, the latter of which will be managing it. It will be the first high-performance computer center in the country.

While LAU has solid experience in running computing clusters, joining the CMS high-power computing community boosts the university’s drive to extend knowledge and capability of computing architecture and infrastructure.

“This is a project that will boost the cyber infrastructure of Lebanon while providing the universities with much-needed computing power to carry out scientific research,” said Martin Gastal, CMS experimental area manager at CERN.

Thanks to the university’s programs and partnerships, students who wish to pursue research at CERN – or other leading physics and engineering organizations – will have a solid start at LAU.

As Akle noted, “Associating LAU with one of the largest research institutes in the world will bring us international visibility needed to foster strong research collaborations and improve our ranking.”



Into the War

By Hanan Nasser

An LAU theater production helps a whole generation learn what happened during the civil war

The audience was asked to break up into four groups, each according to the color of their tickets for LAU's major theater production *Abou Warde El-Santa*, directed by Theater Lecturer Aliya Khalidi. Each group of 20 attendees was led on separate routes into the Safadi Fine Arts Building, while being assured that they could leave at any time if the experience became too intense. With that, they left behind a familiar world to be immersed into one from another time: the Lebanese civil war.

Once in the Fine Arts Building, the groups followed the stories of four characters in their attempt to reconstruct their memories of the war, which lasted from 1975 until 1990.

Khalidi said she got the idea to write a play about the war when she began teaching the history of Arabic theater at LAU in 2010. She was perturbed by how

little her students – many of whom were born after the war ended – knew about that period of Lebanon's history.

There is a reason for that, she said. "Either their parents didn't tell them or the responsibility lies on the government, who should be writing history books. Both have not happened." The reason the government hasn't written a history book for schools, Khalidi said, is that "nobody has agreed on one history."

To reflect that disagreement, each group who attended the play saw it from a different angle. "In the same way as the Lebanese people saw and continue to see the war from their own angle, people who started the war with a massacre in their village have a totally different impression of the war than those who started off the war meeting the love of their lives," said Khalidi.



"I have more affection for this country that has suffered so much. It deserves that we at least try to make a difference."



While older Lebanese have their own memories of the conflict, Lebanon's millennials don't. When rehearsals began, Khalidi discovered that even her team members – most of them LAU alumni – knew very little about the war. She showed them videos and asked them to do their own in-depth research in order to "get a feel for it."

The assignment led to the discovery of a dark family secret for one team member. Scenographer Walid Salibi, who graduated in 2015 with a BA in Communication Arts, said the topic was never discussed at home. But as he talked about his research with his parents one day, his father told him that his uncle had been kidnapped from a café during the war and killed. This was the first time Salibi had ever heard of the uncle who had died.

He said he began to understand why the older generation refused to open up about their experiences. "My father never talked about it because he didn't want to remember the war. There was no closure; no one had closure," he said.

The horrors of the era were also reflected in the unusual title of the play. During the war, Khalidi explained, adults used to scare kids into behaving by telling them stories of a violent militiaman known only as Abu El-Jamejim, whom no one had ever seen.

One of the production's actors, Ram Nouredine, suggested the play's faceless militiaman character be called Abou Ali El-Santa. Khalid decided to keep El-Santa, but to pair it with the common nickname Syrian protesters would call each other at the beginning of the revolution in that country: Abou Warde.

"The idea is this unknown character: You don't know whom he is affiliated with or what he does, but you know that he is a murderer and a savage. But he doesn't even have a face," she said.

At the end of the play, the four groups reunited after passing through four checkpoints, visiting a morgue, watching children hide in underground shelters, and meeting an agitated bomb maker. An eerie silence overcame the Gulbenkian Theater. On the seats were the names of all the massacres that took place during the war, as stills from that time were projected above the stage.

"Now I have more compassion for Lebanon," said Salibi. "I have more affection for this country that has suffered so much. It deserves that we at least try to make a difference."

Coming Home

Why so many Lebanese give up a life abroad
for their home country

By Louisa Ajami

FEATURE



"Despite all the issues that we face on a daily basis, there is a lot to enjoy in this country."

Lebanon loses thousands of its best and brightest every year. Our leaders and public figures regularly lament the brain drain pulling Lebanon's most qualified professionals abroad.

But what much of this national anguish overlooks is the power of strong institutions – such as LAU – to draw back our native talent. Even though there have been numerous opportunities for a successful life and career outside of Lebanon for many of the university's faculty and staff, many have chosen to return.

Certainly, the environment at LAU is conducive to personal and professional advancement. But there is also something about Lebanon that almost everybody eventually misses.

For the Lebanese who left and came back, and the foreigners who chose the country as a second home, there will always be questions about their decision. The answer inevitably has to do with the incredible pull that Lebanon has on people's heartstrings.

Two years ago, Samar Aad Makhoul and her husband decided that, after 15 years of living abroad, it was time to move back to Lebanon. Makhoul, the accreditation and continuous improvement coordinator at the Adnan Kassar School of Business, had been all over the world, most recently living in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. "So many people have asked us why we came back when many Lebanese are trying to leave," she said.

Caesar Abi Shdid gets the same question. According to the associate professor and chair at the Department of Civil Engineering, "Most Lebanese we speak to find it hard to believe that someone would leave what is perceived as a glamorous life abroad to come back to Lebanon." Abi Shdid, who returned after 14 years in Miami, says his motivation was family ties here, the relative safety of the country, and his current role at the School of Engineering that gives him "the chance to be in a position that can positively influence the future generations of Lebanon."

"Despite all the issues that we face on a daily basis, there is a lot to enjoy in this country," agreed Makhoul. Off the top of her head she listed food, nightlife, sightseeing, outdoor activities and culture as part of the country's allure. "Plus there's the quality of education at the secondary and higher level," she added.

Those are some of the same reasons Dr. Alain Sabri always comes back. Sabri, chairman of the Department of Otolaryngology and assistant dean at the Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine, has left Lebanon three times in his life, starting at the age of 15 during the war, and has returned after each sojourn. He recently came back after an appointment at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, where he was recruited to help establish the Cleveland Clinic-Abu Dhabi Hospital. He has been tasked with helping build his young department and to assist in further developing the School of Medicine and the Medical Center. He said he returned for his family, a professional sense of mission and his home culture. What he says is keeping him and his family here for good is the resilience and energy of the Lebanese people. "We are an active society, and we always look on the bright side. Whatever we've been through, we fight to produce on every level – academic, cultural, humanitarian. And that is very rewarding at all levels."

Lebanon even draws in people who didn't grow up here. Dr. Nancy Chedid, assistant professor of Anatomy at the Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine, is an Italian-American from Boston who honored her late husband's wish for their three sons to live in his home country. Chedid loves her adopted country so much that she wrote her feelings down in a memoir, called *Snow on the Barbecue*.

"While I hoped the book would enlighten people on the outside about the wonders of Lebanon, people who have spent their whole lives here said reading it helped reawaken them to the beauty of their own country," she said. "For me, the journey – exploring, writing, expanding my circle of friends in Lebanon – has been among the best experiences of my life."

When asked if she planned on ever leaving Lebanon, she said, "Where I see myself in the future is right here. I am surrounded by extended family, and my children are entirely acclimated to Lebanon. When all is said and done, this is home."

For Makhoul, every country has its challenges, but Lebanon's are easily overcome with a little positivity and patience. "Yes we have unemployment issues, yes we have political instability, but we always work for the best," Makhoul said.

"No matter what," concluded Sabri, "there is no place like home." 🇅🇱



DNA of the Ancient Mariners

By Louisa Ajami

A famous LAU geneticist discovers that our ancient ancestors were more diverse than previously thought

“Women who lived in Phoenician settlements were from diverse ethnic backgrounds, either as indigenous inhabitants of the lands or as foreigners from further afar.”

Where do we come from? That question has transfixed people across the world for millennia. For most people in Lebanon, the answer is simple: the Phoenicians.

But who were they, exactly, and where did they come from?

While archaeologists have been studying the ancient people for decades, they've had little to work with, whether in the form of artifacts or contemporary written accounts. That's where the advent of DNA technology comes in.

Pierre Zalloua, world-renowned geneticist and faculty member at the Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine, has spent much of his career studying the genetic markers of Lebanon's ancient ancestors. Indeed, in recent groundbreaking studies, he discovered that one out of every 17 men in the Mediterranean carries Phoenician

genes and that a mixture of lineages from Phoenician settlements across the region are present in modern Lebanese DNA.

Now, in a paper recently published in the scientific journal PLoS ONE, Zalloua and Professor Lisa Matisoo-Smith of the University of Otago focus on mobility in Phoenician societies, which emerged via Levantine coastal city states around 1800 BCE. Over the next 900 years, Phoenicians spread across the Mediterranean, establishing settlements in North Africa, Spain, southern Italy, Malta and Cyprus. They were first and foremost mariners, who responded to the Assyrian Empire's need for precious metals by sailing westward in search of trade.

The scientists and their team studied Phoenician and Punic DNA from several ancient burial sites in Lebanon



and Sardinia. The Punic people were Phoenicians who had their own society based in Carthage, Tunisia. This study is the first time DNA has been extracted from bones excavated in Lebanon and Sardinia.

The article's authors focused on genes from the mitochondria of the cell, which is passed down only from the mother's side. Thus, their research could only give them information on the samples' maternal lineage.

Their results indicate that the women who lived in Phoenician settlements were from diverse ethnic backgrounds, being either indigenous inhabitants of the lands where the Phoenicians set up trade networks or foreigners from further afar.

"The Phoenicians were inclusive and integrative of the indigenous peoples, and there was much mobility, often over

great distances, around the Phoenician networks," said Zalloua.

Indeed, "We found mitochondrial DNA that was likely from North Africa or the Near East and even a lineage that is from Northwestern Europe, which today is found at high frequency in southern Ireland – a location linked to Phoenician traders in search of tin," said Matisoo-Smith in a press release.

"These findings tell us a lot about Phoenician society," said Zalloua. "When you bring women to settlements, it means you have a stable society. They were not conquerors, but traders. The level of female mobility in their society is quite shocking for the time."

"It also shows us that identity is a cultural phenomenon," he added. "Most of the samples that we have are culturally Phoenician, as they were

buried as Phoenicians, but genetically, they are diverse."

In the future, Zalloua has projects lined up to study DNA from the nucleus of the cell, which comes from both the male and female lines, and which his team is currently sequencing. He hopes the results will tell us the extent of the variability that existed in the population. "We know there was a large admixture of genes among Phoenicians, but further DNA studies will tell us more specifics."

Any further studies will no doubt be well received by an interested public. "We are only at the tip of the iceberg," he said. "There is so much yet to learn, so much to unravel about this enigmatic culture."

Cross-Town Traffic

By Alyce Abi Shdid

An LAU engineering professor is among those trying to find a solution to Lebanon's seemingly hopeless traffic situation



Every driver in Lebanon has experienced it: the bumper-to-bumper, seemingly endless stream of cars that makes reaching the destination seem impossible.

The traffic problem in Lebanon is a serious one from multiple angles. Although driver frustration may be the most obvious, dangers to the safety of both passengers and pedestrians are a major public-health risk. As part of a leading research institution committed to serving both students and Lebanon at large, LAU Associate Professor of Civil Engineering John Khoury has taken up Lebanon's traffic problems as his main focus of research, with the goal of improving the current situation.

Like other engineering disciplines, traffic engineering has taken advantage of computer simulation, in which users apply multiple-solution schemes and can compare, tweak and re-test models, making final implementation more successful. For example, Khoury collected data from the 210 intersections with operating signals in various locations throughout Mount Lebanon and the greater Beirut area. Running it through simulation software has allowed him and his team to improve service levels for 80 intersections to date – an achievement that reduces the number of problematic junctions by more than 30 percent.

Also through the use of computer simulation, Khoury was able to monitor the timing of traffic signals in order to make adjustments that will minimize congestion, regulate the flow of traffic, reduce drivers' frustration, and improve overall roadway safety.

Khoury's latest research involves the use of advanced driver-simulation technology within LAU's new Driving Simulation Lab. The driving simulator consists of a full-size car cab outfitted with sensors and surrounded by LCD displays, intended to re-create the driving experience on Lebanon's roads. Khoury and his team are using this state-of-the-art technology to study drivers' behavior and their reactions to real-life situations in order to optimize the flow of traffic and improve safety.

Kamar Amine, a master's student working under Khoury's supervision, is hopeful that this research will make a difference. "I personally experience the frustration of driving on Lebanon's roads every day, so it is rewarding to know that I am a part of research that is redefining traffic conditions in Lebanon that will eventually improve the issues that drivers face."

Drivers and local authorities are noticing the results. Captain Rayen El Chammas, head of the Beirut-area Internal Security Forces branch, commented, "After Dr. Khoury retimed the intersections along the Corniche el-Mazraa, flow through the corridor improved noticeably. My team and I were able to feel the improvements, which eased our stressful work in the field."

"The motivating factor behind my work is the knowledge that every finding my research produces is improving the current traffic situation in Lebanon," Khoury said.

Khoury's 12-plus years of experience in transportation and traffic engineering position him to guide Lebanese authorities in finding solutions to the worsening situation on Lebanon's roads. As a registered professional traffic operations engineer in the US, Khoury is no stranger to handling busy intersections, inefficient traffic signals, poor arterial highway design, and roadways with failing traffic-service levels.

"The traffic problem in Lebanon is a serious one – one that demands our attention in order to find appropriate solutions," Khoury said. "Our research aims to provide solutions that make driving in Lebanon less frustrating and more safe."

To combat these and other threats to Lebanon's drivers and pedestrians, Khoury and his research team are deploying a varied set of tools.

"The motivating factor behind my work is the knowledge that every finding my research produces is improving the current traffic situation in Lebanon."

Understanding Gender in the Quran

By Brooke Anderson

IWSAW lecture aims to push back against claims that Islam is founded on extreme patriarchy



One of the most debated and least understood aspects of the Quran is the role and status of women. To shine a light on the issue, which regularly ignites debates in academia as well as popular culture, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) invited George Mason University Religious Studies Professor Maria Dakake to give a talk as part of the institute's ongoing Food4Thought lecture series.

Dakake used the lecture, which took place in mid-January, as an opportunity to go over extensive research by scholars who are Muslim women themselves.

"As a female scholar of Islam, I'm often asked broad questions: What is the status or situation of women in Islam?" began Dakake, as she addressed an auditorium of students, scholars and researchers at the lecture. She responded to these questions by pointing out that, "There are over half a billion Muslim women living in a variety of contexts. It's like describing Christian women."

One element of confusion, she noted, is that "The Quran doesn't speak in legal terminology. A lot of its phrases are widely open to interpretation. Knowing one or two passages won't give you a full understanding."

With that, she delved into research by prominent female Muslim scholars beginning in the 1980s, when there was a surge of interest in the Quran among women academics. Their findings have upended long-held assumptions about a religion often characterized as highly patriarchal. Many of these scholars, having grown frustrated with secular

feminism, wanted to reshape gender relations in Islam while being faithful to Islamic traditions.

Dakake detailed the work of three notable female Islamic scholars who made an impact on the study of women and the Quran.

The first is Pakistani-American theologian and Islamic feminist scholar of the Quran Riffat Hassan, whose study of the story of Adam and Eve in the Quran shows them more as equals than they are in the Bible version. Hassan noted that in the Quran, Eve does not issue from Adam's rib, and in the story of the garden, both fall victim to temptation and then repent together.

Another feminist Islamic scholar, African-American convert Amina Wadud, approached the Quran through the lens of social justice. She interpreted the book as saying that God creates a single soul and everything in pairs.

Azizah Al Hibri, a Lebanese-American legal scholar who worked as a corporate lawyer on Wall Street before turning to Islamic studies, has focused her research on law and etymology. As a native Arabic speaker, she was able to study the nuances of the wording. Addressing an often-problematic verse – 4:34 – seen as establishing patriarchal order in inheritance and guardianship, she found it to be relatively equitable for its time. According to the verse, if men have extra wealth, they should spend it to support women. If men do not have more than women, all other rights granted to men no longer apply. In cases in which women can support themselves, the rule is nullified.

All three scholars said they view certain verses in the Quran as progressive for the book's time and have noted gradualism in the Islamic world – that is, the possibility of interpretations of the text evolving in the future.

"Shining a light on the views of feminist scholars who re-interpret religious texts, study the origin of Islam, and share their knowledge with the religious establishment is greatly needed."

After the talk, attendees engaged in a lively conversation on the subject, asking pointed questions and offering up examples from their own experiences. Myriam Sfeir, IWSAW's associate director, said, "Muslim feminists often reject the male-centered interpretation of the Quran, and exposing their work triggers debate and leads to consciousness raising."

She added, "Shining a light on the views of feminist scholars who re-interpret religious texts, study the origin of Islam and the Quran, and share their knowledge and experiences with the religious establishment is greatly needed."

The lecture will undoubtedly lead to healthy debate, as it exposed non-traditional views of a text many claim to understand.



Khalil Gibran – From Lebanon to the World

By Brooke Anderson

Celebrating the enduring legacy of the Lebanese-American artist

A dedicated group of scholars confirmed that the legacy of Khalil Gibran (1883 – 1931), the internationally renowned Lebanese-American author, artist and poet, is stronger and more relevant than ever.

From January 4 through 6, “Lebanon’s Message to the World,” the third conference on the life and work of Khalil Gibran, was held in Beirut by LAU’s Center for Lebanese Heritage and the Gibran Chair for Values and Peace at the University of Maryland. The gathering drew panelists and attendees from Lebanon, the United States, Egypt, Australia, India, Tunisia and the United Kingdom.

During the conference, scholars and researchers painted a nuanced portrait of a man both pious and critical of religious establishment, a Christian claimed by members of all faiths, and someone ahead of his time in an age of strict conformity.

“I believe his message is still very relevant,” said May Rihani, director of the Gibran Chair for Values and Peace at the University of Maryland, and niece of Ameen Rihani – the renowned writer, close friend and confidant of Gibran.

“The new generation of Lebanese, Americans and everyone anywhere in the world needs to read these messages he talks about, which are useful for their own lives. The message is important for the new generations.”

Gibran, best known for his mystical book of prose *The Prophet*, has fascinated people around the world for nearly a century, with his writing, visual artwork, and advocacy for equality among genders, races and religions. He spent most of his life in the United States, writing mainly in English and Arabic within a community of Lebanese expatriate writers who would revolutionize modern Arabic literature. However, his words have touched readers throughout the world – *The Prophet* alone has been translated into more than 40 languages.

In an effort to track Gibran’s far-reaching work and influence, Australian filmmaker Glen Kalem traveled to the United States, France and China to interview those who knew and studied the artist. In a documentary screened at the conference, he brought viewers to Gibran’s longtime home in Boston, his apartment in Paris, and to China to hear from a Chinese professor of Arabic literature who taught classes on the artist.

Speaking to Gibran’s enduring legacy through *The Prophet*, Kalem said, “He can express his intentions, his soul, and a soul doesn’t die. You’ll get through to everyone... There’s a popular message, that has resonated in many different cultures and peoples.”

He added, “I felt he wanted to help the world, making a book that could mentor people. In the end it’s a personal journey.”

Indeed, Gibran’s universality is what has allowed him to transcend different faiths, despite his unconventional nature.

“Khalil Gibran wasn’t a traditional Christian, but he was a true Christian,” said US-based religious scholar and cleric Reverend Paul-Gordon Chandler, author of *In Search of a Prophet*. The scholar detailed the importance of Gibran’s timeless message, noting that, similar to Gibran, the younger generations are increasingly drawn to general spirituality rather than conventional religion.

Some new findings were revealed at the conference. Francesco Medici, a literary critic and researcher who has translated many of Gibran’s work into Italian, revealed discoveries of unpublished and rare material documenting Gibran’s journey and major events in his life.

Tania Sammons from the Telfair Museum in the US state of Georgia spoke about the relationship between Gibran and his patron Mary Haskell and “their journey in literature together.” Haskell was mentioned in some of Gibran’s personal

letters that were recently auctioned at Sotheby’s Dubai for nearly 200,000 dollars. “The couple left a legacy to Lebanon and the world to the 21st century and beyond,” Sammons said.

For children’s book author Helen Chiha, an audience member from Australia, Gibran is an inspiration and basis for her work.

“Gibran was a man both pious and critical of religious establishment, a Christian claimed by members of all faiths, and someone ahead of his time in an age of strict conformity.”

“I’m writing an adaptation of *The Prophet* for children. It’s about the message. This book will be based on this adventure in Lebanon, the prophet,” said Chiha, who learned about the conference from Kalem. For most of her target audience, readers between five and six years old, this will be their introduction to Gibran.

“It was important to launch a movement that does not stop at the end of the conference but continues beyond to keep Gibran’s legacy running and alive in the memories of people. We must keep up the research, studies and all other activities related to this great poet,” said Henri Zoghaib, director of the Center for Lebanese Heritage at the end of the conference’s second day.

Rihani echoed the sentiment. “Gibran has an enduring legacy, which will be with us today, tomorrow and many years to come,” she said.



The Heart of Lebanon

Poem by Hiba Sobh

Image by Ramzi Abi Saab

*Close your eyes, and imagine,
the rush of fast jazz, as beautiful and chaotic
as the flurry of waves,
the touch of glasses
as words that
disappear and appear
are endless in the seas of conversation,
these oceans are held in their homes,
the cafes and hidden restos of Mar Mikhael,
golden watercolor washes over the lights of Downtown,
a living painting of Paris,
where wandering youth find themselves within the company of eyes,
and hearts touch,
as the stars in the clear night sky of the Beqaa,
vast and deep within
It's light, as the waters of unseen depths,
where fishermen of the seaside wait patiently,
as cats sleeping under the sun,
touching the papers of readers
as they watch the dawn, rising from the mountains,
where the Cedars, majestic and gracious,
live within the heights,
as the heart of
Lebanon*

Hiba Sobh is a second-year English major.

Ramzi Abi Saab is a senior majoring in Information Technology and Operations Management.



Is Lebanon Ready for the Youth's Vote?

By Hanan Nasser

Young blood injects new life into the country's first parliamentary elections in nine years

"This demographic group could have a significant impact on the upcoming elections."

As Lebanon gears up for its first parliamentary elections in almost 10 years, many LAU students will be voting for the first time in their lives. How involved in politics young people are, which electoral system they prefer, and how they will vote in the end are questions politicians, academics and activists across Lebanon are asking.

Over half a million young people – a large percentage of Lebanon's voting population – have reached the voting age of 21 since the last parliamentary election in 2009, said LAU Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Affairs Makram Ouais. "This demographic group could have a significant impact on the elections in May 2018."

Based on discussions he's had across campus, Ouais said that many students are interested in participating in the elections, though "many are frustrated and do not understand the law that was passed in 2017." In Ouais' opinion, any substantial impact that young voters will have is "conditional in large part on whether or not [they] have choices of candidates who address their needs and on political parties and groups' efforts to reach out to voters, explain the electoral law, and convince them to go to the polls on election day."

For her part, Maria Tannous, a master's student in International Affairs, said she would vote for new and independent candidates, though as long as "sectarianism is drafting every system, we are ending up with the same problem." She added that while Lebanon is known for being a democratic country, "we are in need of reform."

Echoing Tannous' frustration, International Affairs graduate Rana Abdul-Rahim said that she prefers a non-sectarian parliament, and in order to achieve that, the whole electoral system must be changed.

Ouais noted that in a positive development, several civil-society groups and political parties are working to "create new electoral choices. The next election will tell if such efforts will bring about any change and offer the young electorate new players to choose from."

Abdul-Rahim agrees that civil-society movements have offered Lebanese youth a new medium of expression for their political and social concerns that "do not necessarily have to be through the platform of political parties." Abdul-Rahim, who voted during the last parliamentary elections, said she would always go for the candidate or party she was most convinced had Lebanon's best interests in mind.

Architecture and Political Science double major Christa Maria El Hoayek said she was interested in the elections and wanted to understand the technical details, such as the division of districts, the potential use of pre-printed ballots, and the question of a women's quota.

She said she was looking forward to voting for the first time, adding that she shared the political views of her family and would be voting for the same candidates as they would.

In the end, what Hoayek and so many other young people want is for parliament to listen to them and "represent what I want my country to become in the future."

Helping People Live Their Best Lives

By Louisa Ajami

The School of Nursing teaches students how to engage with the wider community



Nursing is more than just clinical care. It's about helping patients improve their lives by imparting important knowledge about health and lending a helping hand to those in need.

Professors and students from the Alice Ramez Chagoury School of Nursing (ARCSON) take this duty very seriously, regularly conducting intensive community service and outreach as part of their training. This helps patients and members of the broader public learn how to live their best and most comfortable lives.

Through a series of intensive courses, the school's professors have been involving their students in diverse efforts to support the community outside the university, in line with LAU's commitment to civic engagement. "Our school has a strong philosophy on preparing students to be engaged in community health," said ARCSON Dean Anahid Kulwicki. "Through strong partnerships with community organizations, our students and faculty address a range of important topics that address the needs of the community in their own setting."

Caring for the disadvantaged is integrated into ARCSON's clinical intensive course Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles. The course takes place in the months of September and October and is led by Clinical Instructor Mira Abi Saad-Youssef and Assistant Professor Rita Doumit. In her portion of the course's clinical aspect, Doumit and her students pay repeated visits to up to eight families in need. Visits include providing health

assessments of the family members, giving psychological support when needed, and teaching the beneficiaries about health and safety topics. Doumit and her students also secure medical supplies and food items with the help of their partners Serop Ohanian and Raquelle Ketchajian, respectively the director and senior social worker at the Howard Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation.

For example, in one visit, the team worked with a family of Syrian refugees living under precarious financial conditions. They obtained milk and diapers for the family's newborn and school supplies for the older daughter. In addition, they cased the family's apartment and found a number of safety hazards. Curtain rods were fixed to prevent them from falling and exposed outlets were covered to make the house safer for the children.

"The services provided by our nursing students to the families not only improved their quality of life but also brought hope, joy and comfort. Many family members shed tears of joy during our visits and showed gratitude for all the help and compassion offered by our students. It was painful to say goodbye during our last visit," said Doumit.

For her portion of the course, Abi Saad-Youssef teaches students how to spread awareness on health to the wider public. Students learn how to host public-health events, including one that takes place every year on the last day of the course. During the event, held in the city of



Byblos, students lead awareness sessions on hypertension, diabetes, cancer, healthy lifestyle and more, in addition to providing free screenings, such as glucose testing, to attendees.

The event is popular with locals, as there are typically low levels of awareness in the general population about both preventing and dealing with common diseases. Abi Saad-Youssef recalled an attendee who discovered he had severe hypertension after undergoing a free blood pressure screening at the event. The students worked with him on a plan to address his condition.

One of the benefits of the course is that the students “are practicing the role of the nurse in a community setting,” said Abi Saad-Youssef. “They learn how to talk to patients, spread information and answer sometimes-difficult questions.”

In Aley, Clinical Instructor Zeina El-Jordi’s students organized mental-health awareness sessions for local high-school students as part of her Mental Health Clinical Intensive course. El-Jordi’s students spoke to attendees about anxiety, depression and substance abuse, topics not always discussed openly in Lebanon but that affect a large percentage of any population. “Our students were very creative in their education sessions,” said El-Jordi. “They prepared educational games, brochures and posters, and

educated more than 400 young people on how to spot signs of mental illness and cope with the disease.”

“We nurses don’t worry about the health of just one person at a time but entire communities at a time,” she added.

Nursing students also take part in extra-curricular initiatives. For example, members of the Nursing Club began collecting donations for the One Kilo Campaign during the fall 2017 semester. Taking part in the campaign is an annual tradition for the Nursing Club, and this year the target was to collect 150 kilograms of nonperishable food for the needy, including pantry staples such as rice, lentils and canned foods. Members of the club provided donations and sought contributions from other nursing students and faculty and staff. They surpassed their goal, collecting 176 kilos.

The donations would go to the organization Bonheur du Ciel, run by Father Majdi Allawi, which provides

food to poor families in the area.

Just a few days before Christmas, 12 nursing students along with a number of ARCSON faculty and staff members visited Bonheur du Ciel’s Byblos center. They delivered the donated food and helped prepare a large, healthy meal for disadvantaged people who depend on the center.

Among those who enjoyed the meal were poor parents with young children, low-income workers, and refugees. Farah Bou Said, president of the Nursing Club, said after the event, “My heart was filled with happiness to take part. Some people have houses but not homes, and they miss the feeling of having warm family gatherings. They come not only for the food, but also for the people and the sense of community.”

“I believe that life is about giving, not taking,” Bou Said added. “I have always believed that, and it is a major part of my career path as a nurse.”

“We nurses don’t worry about the health of just one person at a time but entire communities at a time.”



Protecting Lives in Lebanon

By Irina du Quenoy

FEATURE



The Red Cross saves thousands of lives a year. LAU is helping the organization retain its lifeblood – its volunteers

Every day of the week, dozens of orange jumpsuit-clad personnel at the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) station in Hazmieh coordinate the dispatch of ambulances and provide basic first aid to patients at the station itself. The LRC is probably the most publicly visible national society in Lebanon, with several dozen stations throughout the country, manned by thousands of volunteers who work alongside a couple hundred staff, saving lives and responding to natural disasters as they occur. Yet few outsiders are aware of the partnership between the Lebanese Red Cross and the Lebanese American University, which has been meaningfully improving LRC's capacity to carry out its mission.

"The passion behind our involvement comes from our strong belief that the work done by the Lebanese Red Cross is truly valuable," says Assistant Professor of Management Studies Jamal Maalouf, referring to the project she is currently carrying out with Amine Abi Aad, her husband and fellow assistant professor

at the Adnan Kassar School of Business (AKSOB). The LRC approached the pair in February 2017, asking them to conduct research aimed at improving volunteer retention rates.

"The selection of volunteers is not easy, especially in EMS (Emergency Medical Services)," says Secretary General of the LRC Georges Kettaneh. "Because we want volunteers who are accepted by the entire community, whether it be Tripoli, Sidon, Zahle, Jounieh or Baalbek," and who can "give 20 to 30 hours of their free time a week."

"The LRC used to take volunteers for granted," says the organization's Learning and Development Manager Berna Beyrouthy. "We trained them extensively, but didn't pay much attention to the question of how to retain them." Recently, however, "we have opened our eyes to this issue," explains Abdallah Zogheib, the LRC Emergency Medical Services director. "We have the feeling that the lifecycle of volunteers is decreasing – it used to be up to ten years."



Given the amount of resources that the LRC invests in training each new volunteer – according to Zogheib, the comprehensive training process takes up to two years – and the difficulty in recruiting committed individuals who are able to move easily within Lebanon's diverse community landscape, the ability to retain experienced volunteers becomes crucial for the continuing success of the organization's work in Lebanon. Enter Maalouf and Abi Aad.

"Our role is to conduct a study using qualitative interviews, as well as gather quantitative data through surveys to try and understand the reasons behind these trends," says Maalouf. The two researchers plan on administering a survey to approximately 800 current LRC volunteers, as well as carrying out smaller focus-group interviews with volunteers and the heads of different centers. "We are very happy that 42 of the centers have agreed to participate, with good representation from all the regions of Lebanon." They also intend to find out from those who left why they stopped volunteering.

According to Abi Aad, "We have a strong feeling the reason is burnout, but we won't know until we have the data." Once the survey and interviews are completed, the two researchers will analyze the data and provide the Red

Cross with policy recommendations to achieve higher retention rates.

Maalouf and Abi Aad's position as faculty at AKSOB makes them particularly well suited for the project. "First of all, it's an HR problem," explains Maalouf. "The scholarly literature in the business field has relied on insights from studies on Human Resources to solve problems of volunteer management."

Furthermore, one "can look at this issue in terms of employee retention and burnout, which is part of management," says Abi Aad. "The LRC is a national society, where performance is measured not in terms of money but in terms of how many people in need they help. And this is directly related to the number of volunteers that they have – making it a managerial problem, too."

The Red Cross-LAU volunteer-retention project is the second major joint effort between the two institutions, which a few years ago signed a Memorandum of Understanding enshrining a partnership that continues to evolve. The initial project, still ongoing, began with a series of serendipitous events.

"One day, Abbas Tarhini [assistant professor of information technology at AKSOB] said to me, 'You know, I've been thinking about ambulances and

how they often get stuck in traffic in this country,'" says Jordan Srou, assistant professor of Operations Management at AKSOB. "And since my background is in transportation and engineering, I agreed that we should do something about that." Through previously existing contacts with the LRC, Srou asked if the international organization might be interested in collaborating to reduce ambulance travel time.

Again serendipitously, the LRC "had just started with a new dispatch system, a new way to receive calls and dispatch ambulances," says Srou. With the new system came reams of data, which the LRC was happy to turn over to Srou and Tarhini for analysis, relying on their expertise to determine if any of the new information could be used to improve emergency response.



"The first thing we figured out was that there were a lot of problems with the data," mainly with the correct recording of timing, says Tarhini, "For example, we would see that they got a call at 8 o'clock and the ambulance was recorded as having left at 7:50." Poring over the data, Tarhini and Srour realized that the synchronization between devices being used by the dispatch system was not correct, that is, the clocks were talking past each other. With this new information, the LAU team worked with their LRC partners to fix the error, an endeavor that has had resonance outside this particular partnership.

"So far, our work with the Red Cross has resulted in three conference papers," notes Tarhini. "The reaction has been fascinating," adds Srour, "because within businesses, most analytics focus on cost, financial records, etc. But no one notices the timing, and given that there's all this talk of the Internet of Things – with smart cities and everyone being interconnected – if everything is running off unsynchronized clocks, this could create significant problems."

For the Red Cross itself, the discovery of the synchronization problem was "a major contribution, because we now know what the gaps are, and what we need to improve," says Hassan Saad, LRC dispatch project manager. "This is then linked to our higher objective, which is improving patients' access to quality pre-hospital emergency care."

While both the volunteer-retention and emergency-response projects are significant and ongoing (the next phase of the latter is to use the new-

and-improved data to predict response times), they are not the only areas in which LAU contributes to the mission of the Red Cross. Outside the parameters of the Memorandum of Understanding, enterprising students have been inspired to follow in their professors' footsteps both by volunteering through the youth chapters and by proposing concrete solutions to the challenges facing the organization.

This past year, two senior Computer Science students, Hussein Ali Ahmad and Ali Hamad, created a "First Responder" application within the context of their senior Capstone Project, under the direction of Sanaa Sharafeddine, associate professor of Computer Science at LAU.

"As an LRC volunteer, I was aware that the Red Cross faces problems in arriving quickly because of lack of resources," says Ahmad. So the students came up with "the idea of creating an app for a community of First Responders" linking the dispatch room with responders already within the immediate vicinity of the emergency.

While still a prototype, the "First Responder App" has the potential to save lives, says Sharafeddine. "In the event of a cardiac arrest, without early

"It's very rare to find academic-real world partnerships that work so well."

intervention the chances of long-term survival decline by as much as 10 percent per minute," she cautions.

In the end, the partnership between LAU and the Lebanese Red Cross serves as a model for university engagement with society. From the LRC's side, "the results of the joint projects so far have been very positive, with a high impact," says Kettaneh, serving, in his view, as a good example of what can happen when organizations work together with academic institutions.

Srour agrees. "It's amazing how open-minded the Red Cross is, and willing to listen to what we're saying as academics, see value in it, and change their systems based on what we're telling them," she says. "It's very rare to find academic-real world partnerships that work so well." ■



What's New at LAU

By Hoda Hilal

The university is launching four new programs this fall

LAU is constantly enhancing its educational catalog with new academic offerings. The university is introducing three new graduate programs and one on the undergraduate level, all to be debuted in fall 2018. Each of the programs responds to the demands of a changing job market in line with the first pillar of LAU's Third Strategic Plan: to expand research capacity and scholarly activities.

Designed to help School of Pharmacy (SOP) graduates tap into the growing pharmaceutical development market in the Middle East, the school's new Master of Science in Pharmaceutical Development and Management was launched to provide a strong foundation in pharmaceutical sciences while allowing graduates to pursue their educational interests. According to SOP Dean Imad Btaiche, graduates will be prepared to take leading roles in the industry, whether in drug development, research, quality control, regulation or management.

The program is unique in its flexibility and variety for offering thesis and non-thesis tracks, along with a management component that is supported by the Adnan Kassar School of Business (AKSOB). "This is the first such program at the School of Pharmacy during its 20-plus years of history, and it represents a major step forward in further putting the school on the map of graduate education," said Btaiche.

Similarly, the School of Arts and Sciences' Department of Natural Sciences created a program to help graduates enter a growing field. The new Master of Science in Nutrition will focus on the determinants, incidence and prevention of obesity and its related diseases, as well as food security, safety and quality. What sets the degree apart is the opportunity for students to participate in human trials and clinical research at LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital. The goal is to produce



leaders in the field who are able to design and implement nutrition programs and promote health in communities and educational institutions across the region.

Associate Professor of Nutrition and Coordinator of the Nutrition Program Nadine Zeeni emphasizes its unique interdisciplinary nature. "It is no longer enough for health workers to be professional," she said. "They also need to be inter-professional to address the region's current health challenges."

The third new graduate program to launch this fall, a Master of Science in Human Resources Management, aims to take HR professionals beyond office work and make a profound impact on the lives of the people in their organizations. The master's will provide graduates with extensive knowledge of HR-management strategies to promote organizational performance in a diversifying landscape. At the end of the program, graduates will have developed a thorough understanding of challenges and trends in the field, as well as solutions to modern management problems.

"We are in contact with the industry, so we know that there's a need in companies today to build a productive workforce and a gap in such knowledge in the market," said Assistant Professor of Management Hussein Ismail. "HR has changed over the past 15 years or so. Today there is a trend in the field toward motivation and talent management," he added. By espousing new movements in the industry, the program will form professionals who can make an impact on organizations in any field.

On the undergraduate level, a new BS

in Applied Physics will bridge physics and fields such as medicine, engineering, astronomy, chemistry, biology and environmental sciences.

"The physics program will add a new dimension to the department and complete the range of scientific programs offered at LAU," said Assistant Professor of Physics at the Department of Natural Sciences Jimmy Romanos.

Each of the programs responds to the demands of a changing job market and falls in line with LAU's goal to expand research capacity and scholarly activities.

To be offered on both the Beirut and Byblos campuses, the bachelor's espouses the real-life application of both experimental and theoretical physics. Three areas of concentration are offered: pre-med physics, materials science and electronics. Classes will promote active and experiential learning by giving students access to the latest technology and lab equipment.

With its new academic offerings, LAU gives current and future students the opportunity to produce new breakthroughs in different fields, in line with what the Third Strategic Plan was developed to accomplish.

Postcard from New York

By Elida Jbeili



The inception of the Lebanese American University began with two American missionaries, Sarah Huntington Smith and her husband Reverend Eli Smith, who traveled to Beirut in the mid-19th century. Huntington Smith's mission was to establish the American School for Girls in Beirut, which she did in 1835, with the help of fellow American Presbyterian missionaries. The institution evolved into the American Junior College for Women (AJCW) in 1924 and then Beirut College for Women (BCW) in 1948. After other iterations, and after accepting men beginning in the 1970s, LAU achieved university status in October 1992. To honor this legacy as a school founded for women by a woman, LAU NY's mission is to connect with thousands of alumnae who have emigrated since graduation to North America.

According to LAU NY Director of Alumni and Special Projects Ed Shiner, "At alumni homecoming events on LAU's campuses, alumnae who graduated 50 years ago have been recognized and given a commemorative pin. I began to wonder how many such alumnae are in North America and do not return to Lebanon for this homecoming event. I was surprised to discover that there were over 200 who

had graduated 50 or more years ago from either AJCW or BCW. Reaching out to these women has been an enjoyable and revealing experience."

One of the thousands of women who graduated and continued onto an incredible life and career is Suzette Fattal-Blair, nurse, nurse practitioner and teacher. After graduating from BCW in 1951 with an Associate of Arts degree, she received a Bachelor in Nursing from the American University of Beirut in 1954 and a Master in Nursing Education from Syracuse University in 1960 as a Rockefeller Scholar. In over 40 years as a nurse professional, she worked in the public, private and military sectors across the United States.

She served in the US Army Nurse Corps as an Ambulatory Care Nurse Practitioner at various military installations, including in Vietnam and in Egypt. In her long military career, she rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel and won many awards for her valiant service, including the Legion of Merit, medals of Meritorious Service, and the Bronze Star, among others. During her service she met her now-husband Dr. James Blair, an army hospital administrator. They moved around quite a bit with their work before permanently settling down in South Carolina in 1986.

Speaking with LAU NY about her experience at BCW, Fattal-Blair stated: "I only have the fondest memories of the time spent at BCW. Everyone who studied with me was smart, creative and elegant. This fostered an encouraging and enabling environment for my cohorts and me. For me, my years at BCW are what ignited the fire to continue my education, and, ultimately, focus on nursing and serving others. Those years laid down the stepping stone for the path I took in my life."

Fattal-Blair's experience goes hand in hand with LAU's mission to provide access to a superior education for its diverse student body and to continue to pay homage to pioneering women like Fattal-Blair who dared to dream big.



A Spark of Hope

By Sally Farhat

Initiatives that help
the country evolve



*Concerned citizens are
bringing Lebanon back to
its former glory.*

*Sally Farhat is a second-year
Multimedia Journalism and
Communications major.*

A country once described by Wadih El Safi as “a piece of heaven” has seen its beauty tarnished. The Switzerland of the Middle East has at times been a war zone, a trash dump, or simply a place for people to leave. Bad governance, unemployment, the brain drain, and, of course, the perpetual garbage crisis are but a few problems that residents of Lebanon have to live with every single day. Some have given up and moved abroad. Others stay but complain ceaselessly. But still others have decided to keep their hopes up and work to revive our country.

Building on the values of creativity, innovation and professionalism, groups of people – often members of the LAU family – are spearheading projects that bring a sense of civic-mindedness and community back to the country. Many of them have found success over the past few years by looking at Lebanon’s problems as opportunities to make improvements.

For example, through his play *Education Is Not a Dream* (Il ‘Ilm mish Hilm), Rachid Hneineh sheds light on the right to education and the problems underprivileged communities in Lebanon face. The second-year Television and Film student wrote and directed the play, which ran in Sidon and was open to the public.

Sanaghrisouha is another play that reinforces the values of peace building and community support. It emerged as the result of collaboration between the NGO Shifaa, the LAU Alumni-Beirut

Chapter, and Associate Professor of Theater Lina Abyad. The piece aims to increase awareness about the importance of helping others to improve the world, and the producers invited children to participate in the action. More than 1,400 people have seen it.

From arts to academia, LAU hosted the two-day workshop focused on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) organized by the Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS). The workshop is part of a bigger initiative called RELIEF, a research and education program devoted to raising the quality of life for refugees and their hosts in Lebanon. The program brought together a great number of researchers, academics and educators.

In the field of science, LAU students Hadi Yassin, Jawad Kansa, Ali El Hajj and Rim Al Saadi invented and engineered a Sign Language Translating Glove that turns hand gestures during sign language into speech. What started off as a school project to break down communication barriers between people with hearing and speech impairment and others ended up being showcased on the international stage.

These are only a few examples of the projects launched and sustained by local Lebanese talents. After all, who better to improve our country and let it shine on the world stage than young and dynamic Lebanese like ourselves? By matching small steps with big dreams, concerned citizens are bringing Lebanon back to its former glory.

Op-Ed

The Real Beauty of Lebanon

By Fatima Al Mahmoud

10,452 square
kilometers of
diversity

"What best distinguishes life in Lebanon falls under one prominent characteristic: our diversity."

*Fatima Al Mahmoud is
a third-year Multimedia
Journalism major*

Ask any Lebanese what makes this country exceptional and listen as they recite the figures ingrained in us since birth: three languages in one greeting, 30 minutes from the mountains to the sea, and four full seasons per year. These pillars form the basis of Lebanese pride, but they are not all.

The best of what distinguishes life in Lebanon falls under one prominent characteristic: our diversity.

The Lebanese parliamentary system alone is composed of members from 18 religions. This pluralism stems from the time of the Ottoman Empire, which encouraged each religion to maintain its independent identity. Today, unlike most countries in the region, Lebanon has no official state religion, and its constitution calls for the practice and protection of religious freedom.

In alignment with religious pluralism stands our political diversity. With all the tension and conflicts that arise in Lebanon, political pluralism is often perceived as a weakness rather than an advantage for the country. However, political diversity is a key part of our democracy. The possibility of conversation and consensus between 100-plus political parties in one small country is challenging – and yet achievable. I believe that the existence of all our diverse parties is not the root of political deadlock, but rather the backbone of an immensely resilient country.

Our natural resources have attracted outsiders throughout history. In the past few generations there were the Ottomans and the French. Further back, we trace the presence of the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans, whose civilizations are still visible in the ruins of Baalbek, Tyre, Byblos and Anjar. Indeed, the Temple of Baalbek, one of Lebanon's five UNESCO World Heritage Sites, was used for worship by both the Romans and Greeks. Striking as ever, these sites still stand tall today, showcasing the layers of civilization that have existed on Lebanese soil.

More recently, those flocking to Lebanon have been tourists. Visitors to our historical sites, however, are not just foreign, for there are many hidden gems for locals to discover too. With all that our country has to offer, a vacation abroad isn't necessary. A short trip to Anfeh is equivalent to a flight to Mykonos or Santorini; a visit to Dar Alma is a ticket to Turin; a night out at BO18 feels like Berlin's party scene; and Downtown Beirut at Christmastime could be mistaken for Paris.

The beauty of life in Lebanon does not end with its attractions. This country's real glory lies in its plurality and variety, its resilience and recovery, its chaos and noise, and, most of all, in the diversity of the people and our love for our homeland.



A Lifetime at LAU

By Louisa Ajami

Two of the university's longest-serving staff reflect on their enriching years of service



There's something about working at LAU. That's why so many of our faculty and staff stay on for years. Some employees have even served the LAU community for generations. Among those, two are retiring this year.

Brigitte Baroudy has seen all of the university's iterations. She started as a student at LAU when it was known as the Beirut College for Women and graduated the same year it was renamed Beirut University College, in 1973. A Computer Mathematics major, Baroudy began her career at a private company but was recruited by the university's IT Department in 1978.

As technology advanced rapidly, Baroudy kept up, taking advantage of development opportunities offered by LAU and making sure the department kept pace with changes in the field. She worked her way up, and by the time she retired this year, she was director of IT Security.

Asked why she stayed with the university for all those years, she said, "I never felt the urge to move on to another educational institution or company, because at LAU I experienced continuous growth and satisfaction – not to mention the stability LAU offered us during the long years of war."

Indeed, the university stayed strong during Lebanon's civil war, from 1975 to 1990. Still, like all institutions, it was badly affected by the conflict, and when the war ended, Baroudy was one of the employees who helped LAU not only to rebuild but to expand into a world-class university.

Throughout her service, Baroudy and the university grew together. "I have always admired the continuous growth and innovation at LAU," she said. "Preparing the leaders of the future has always contributed to my positive attitude and outlook, year after year."

Also retiring this year is Nadia Daoud, a steady presence at the university for almost 30 years. Daoud graduated from Beirut College for Women in 1972 and spent the next two decades first as a grade-school teacher and later as an English instructor at the Continuing Education Program at Beirut University College. As the civil war wound down,

Daoud's friend and former teaching colleague Leila Saleeby invited her to join the staff at the Alumni Relations Office.

Daoud reminisces about how different the campus was when she first started in 1990. "There were only around 100 or 150 students then. The campus was full of people from villages who were displaced by the war." Together with Saleeby, she worked to reactivate the Alumni Relations Office from the bottom up. They pieced together as much as they could find on alumni from decades of the university's past. "We worked a lot. It was a very nice job. You get to know people and learn how the university changed their lives," Daoud said.

A few years later, Daoud got the chance to build up another major department when she was asked to join the newly opened Admissions Office. There, she and her colleagues focused on administrative work as well as publicity and recruitment. "We built relations with schools all over Lebanon," she said. "You form relationships with students, faculty, parents, government offices. It gave me training in dealing with people, and that's what secured my success."

"You get to know people and learn how the university changed their lives."

Both Baroudy and Daoud witnessed the transformation of the university – in name, size, status and influence. Aside from their careers, LAU gave them experiences and friendships to last a lifetime.

"I will miss the team and relationships I formed because we worked so well with one another. I was motivated by their energy and loyalty," said Baroudy. "I received a lot of precious guidance from my mentors, and I had the chance to help develop the next generation, which is a great gift."

"LAU offered me great opportunities to grow and get to know people," said Daoud. "Everything I gained at LAU was to my benefit."

In Memory of Mona Chemali Khalaf, 1939–2018

By Brooke Anderson



The academic and former
head of the women's
institute was honored at
a memorial service on
Beirut campus

*"Women are more
empowered because of her
work, on a national and
regional level. May her values
and optimism serve as an
example for all of us."*

Mona Chemali Khalaf knew how to bring people together. Throughout her life, the professor, economist and former director of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) strove to unite the community around the goal of justice. Khalaf suddenly passed away January 6 of this year. She was 79.

"When we celebrate her life, the best thing we can do is commit to continuing what she started: gender equality no matter what," said LAU President Joseph G. Jabbra, as he spoke to a crowd gathered to remember Khalaf on Beirut campus in late January. "That's what the institute is about. That's what we're all about."

"As we continue to champion the cause that was so dear to Mona Khalaf's heart, we recognize that each accomplishment builds on those of our founding foremothers," said Lina Abirafeh, the current IWSAW director, at the event. "Everything we have achieved until today at LAU and IWSAW is thanks to the efforts of our founding foremother."

Khalaf devoted her life to championing the cause of women through mentorship and teaching, as well as making contributions to various NGOs, women's institutes, and research foundations.

An economist, professor at the Adnan Kassar School of Business, activist and authority on gender and development issues, Khalaf was committed to boosting academic research on women in the Arab world, empowering them through development programs and education, and bringing about policy change. She also sat on the editorial and advisory board of

IWSAW's flagship interdisciplinary journal *Al-Raida* until 2013.

At the memorial service, Abdallah Sfeir, Khalaf's friend and former LAU provost, praised her advocacy of women, starting with her own employees at LAU, ensuring that IWSAW staff got good maternity leave.

"Women are more empowered because of her work, on a national and regional level. May her values and optimism serve as an example for all of us."

The word "balance" is how her son Amin chose to describe her.

"She always managed to straddle both sides of things," he said. "She wasn't afraid of speaking her mind, but didn't talk for no reason. She was determined, but didn't take herself too seriously. She was serious but could also have a good time. She was very demanding of herself and of people she knew she could trust. She really pushed them. She was very driven, motivated and humble. Never wanted to do anything for the sake of getting recognized."

"We have big shoes to fill and we are up to the challenge," Abirafeh said, announcing that IWSAW would continue the research Khalaf started for a project entitled "Our Feminine Memory."

Suad Joseph, professor of Anthropology at the University of California-Davis, said she had planned on seeing Khalaf at a conference in Amman. Now, Joseph told the crowd, she expects Khalaf's work to continue, making sure that "women angels will have equal rights as men angels."

Why I Chose Lebanon

International students at LAU talk about why they chose this particular country to study in

Since its founding, LAU – and BUC and BCW before it – has drawn talented and ambitious students from around the world.

Students choose LAU for its academics, research and reputation. But another appeal of the university is the country that hosts its campuses.

Below, international LAU students tell us what they find special about the country LAU calls home.



"Something I really love about Lebanon is its breathtaking nature and its unique architecture, which has been inspired by its history."

—**Ghufuran Haidar, third-year Business major, Yemen**



"Growing up, I could only see one form of nature. In Lebanon, you have a choice of whom you surround yourself with, and you can always escape the valley to be embraced by a mountain. It is indeed a land of human diversity and natural contrast."

—**Fatema Mohamed, second-year Nutrition major, Bahrain**



"As soon as I arrived in this complex, tiny country, I felt at home, whereas I was thousands of kilometers away from France. You can find everything and its opposite in this place, and this is why this country is so rich. Sea and mountains, perfect streets and rubbish dumps, big cities and desert valleys, stifling heat and snowy winter, ruins and five-star hotels, empty mountain roads and Beirut traffic, all of this creates a chaotic heterogeneity I fell in love with."

—**Lucile Pascanet, SINARC student, France**



"The passion for studying languages motivated me to enroll in the Arabic language course at the Lebanese American University. The Lebanese have a decidedly positive approach to life. Plus, the culture and the lifestyle are very similar to those of the European people. I find myself here very well."

—**Mario Sorbello, SINARC student, Italy**

"I am interested in migration and places where religions exist side-by-side. I thought it would be interesting to come to one of the places I study. At first it was a little overwhelming with the noises and traffic. Now I got used to it. I love the sounds and the food and the culture and the people. There's so much life here. I recommend other people to come here."

—Pernille Knudsen, first-year graduate student in International Affairs and Migration Studies, Denmark



"Even though I have Lebanese roots, I was totally unfamiliar with Lebanon. I had never been here before or even spoke Arabic. I love it here, for its natural beauty, the hospitality of the people, the food. I'm going to miss the beautiful weather and the lifestyle here, which is slower than in the US."

—Ali Mackie, second-year Middle East Studies major, USA



"I like it here. It's so diverse and there are so many different landscapes. People are so welcoming and happy to take you around to see the country."

—Jean-Francois Hay, SINARC student, France



"To me, Lebanon seems like the perfect mix of Eastern and Western culture. I had never been to the Middle East, and I think LAU, Beirut and Lebanon are a great introduction to a part of the world I would like to get to know. I had been told good things about Lebanon, with the food, the climate and the friendly environment being some of the key points."

—Mikkel Leimand, fourth-year Journalism major, Denmark



Outpatients, Welcome In

By Louisa Ajami

LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital cares for the community with its outpatient clinics

Doctors, residents and stakeholders spoke excitedly about the state-of-the-art facilities that would serve the community's youngest patients, as they attended the inauguration of the new Pediatric Outpatient Department at the LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital in Beirut on February 16.

Outpatient Departments, also called outpatient clinics or OPDs, are critical for patients. They offer diagnostic services, treatments and even small procedures without necessitating an overnight stay at the hospital. They are also an important part of the larger hospital's operations, as they are integrated with in-patient services and are staffed by doctors who move back and forth between the clinics and the internal hospital. And for patients, OPDs are a less-expensive alternative to independent clinics.

But there are benefits for physicians, medical faculty and residents too. According to Dr. Rajaa Chatila, assistant

dean for Graduate Medical Education at the Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine, OPDs offer vital real-world experience to physicians-in-training.

"Residency training revolves entirely around translating basic theoretical knowledge acquired in medical school into solving the actual medical problems of patients," she said. "Working in OPDs helps residents acquire new knowledge needed in medical care, such as certain surgical and procedural skills, as well as communication skills and professionalism overall."

It is this combination of established expertise and fresh medical talent that Dr. Gerard Wakim, acting chair of the Department of Pediatrics at the medical school, says sets the department apart. "The OPD provides more complete pediatrics training to our residents because they learn how to work as responsible doctors under the supervision of attending physicians," he said.





“OPD clinics are crucial for every residency program, as it is an essential step in us becoming autonomous physicians and a great way to give back to society.”

“It also provides essential continuity of patient care and involves them in providing services to those in need based on the conviction that we care about all patients equally,” he added.

The medical center’s Pediatric OPD will be staffed full time by medical residents from the School of Medicine. Second- and third-year residents will work under the guidance of attending physicians, while first-year residents will be supervised more rigorously while on duty. Residents will be working under Wakim, alongside Chief Resident of Pediatrics Dr. Nour Youssef.

Like Chatila, Youssef believes that OPDs are an opportunity for new doctors to

practice medicine in different settings with different demands. “Our mission is to provide training for pediatricians to advance in both academic and ethical perspectives.”

“Working at OPDs is the most important tool for residents and students,” agreed Jad Maamary, a pediatric resident with the medical center. “We are not observers, as we would be in the classroom, but rather we are examining, diagnosing and prescribing.”

The new Pediatric OPD joins the Outpatient Ophthalmology Clinic, which

is already established at the hospital. A Family Medicine OPD is also in the works, Chatila said.

For Maamary, the new department is not only a much-needed treatment and training resource, but also an essential part of the community. “OPD clinics are crucial for every residency program, as it is an essential step in us becoming autonomous physicians and a great way to give back to society.”





Success in High Doses

By Alyce Abi Shdid

How the School of Pharmacy's programs prepare graduates for thriving careers in Lebanon and abroad

A rigorous program that takes a multifaceted approach to education: That's the reason so many graduates of LAU's School of Pharmacy (SOP) are successful in their field – in Lebanon and beyond.

"The school's mission for academic quality is driven by continuous improvement, inter-professional and collaborative work, integrity, innovation, leadership, and public service," says SOP Dean Imad Btaiche.

The Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) program boasts an intensive curriculum, accreditation and clinical practice experiences that prepare graduates for postgraduate residency, and fellowship positions leading to clinical pharmacy practice in different specialties. Below, five PharmD alumni speak about how their experiences in the program prepared them for success.

Sarah Alameddine, clinical assistant professor of pharmacy informatics at Nova Southeastern University in Florida, says LAU's PharmD program is effective because it is so challenging. "No one can deny that the curriculum is tough," she says. "But I realized how strong and well drafted the pharmacy curriculum was when I felt competent and confident enough to apply for post-graduate programs in the US. I got accepted into the Pharmacy Informatics Fellowship Program as the only research fellow from a big pool of national and international applicants."

Louis Lteif, assistant professor of Pharmacy Practice in Infectious Diseases and board-certified pharmacotherapy specialist at the University of Hawaii in Hilo, concurs. "The program is very intense and robust, covering diverse topics in depth and ensuring students have a deep understanding of disease states beyond



"I realized how strong and well drafted the pharmacy curriculum is when I felt competent and confident enough to apply for post-graduate programs in the US."

the basics," he says. "I believe this is vital to securing clinical specialty positions, as pharmacy is continuously advancing, and pharmacists are now expected to know more than just about medications."

LAU's PharmD program is geared to provide built-in opportunities for graduates in diverse fields and settings. It holds itself to the advanced standards of pharmacy education in line with the

American Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE).

"The transition was smooth with no major roadblocks," says Cynthia El Rahi, clinical pharmacy specialist and board-certified oncology specialist at Houston Methodist in Texas. And because the school is a member of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP), licensing becomes much easier.

The PharmD program's clinical practice element is another major factor in the success of graduates. Mary Nauffal, a hematology/oncology clinical pharmacy specialist at the Brigham and Women's Hospital, a teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School in Boston, says the experience she gained as a student at the SOP helped reassure her that she was making the right career choice. "The hands-on experience solidified my desire to pursue a career in clinical pharmacy.

The extensive experiential learning offered me confidence, independence, adaptability and flexibility to thrive in new settings."

Caroline Der Nigoghossian, clinical pharmacy manager in the Neuro-Intensive Care Unit and board-certified critical care specialist at the Columbia University Medical Center/New York-Presbyterian Hospital, also attributes her success to her LAU roots. "My experience at LAU's School of Pharmacy definitely prepared me for my current position," she says.

Btaiche evaluates the success of the PharmD program on the high quality of education, faculty experience, and the caliber of students' and graduates' success. "Our graduates are achieving great things by distinguishing themselves in their commitment to lifelong learning and forging successful career paths, thereby enriching the legacy of LAU's School of Pharmacy."



Spreading Knowledge, Strengthening Organizations

By Dana K. Haffar

LAU signs agreements to strengthen private- and public-sector institutions

“LAU has a commitment to the generation, dissemination and application of knowledge, be it through research, teaching or service.”

LAU understands that spreading knowledge and expertise can be instrumental in transforming communities and institutions across the country. To that end, the university works closely with both public- and private-sector institutions that wish to invest in their employees for growth.

Last fall, the university's Continuing Education Program (CEP) partnered with MetLife Insurance to train the company's staff, while, in another agreement, the University Enterprise Office (UEO) established an academic engagement with the Lebanese State Security Directorate.

“LAU, like any leading university, has a commitment to the generation, dissemination and application of knowledge, be it through research, teaching or service,” said LAU Provost

George K. Najjar. “And one of its defining features has been its engagement with and service to the community.”

CEP's role, in fact, has been to marshal all LAU schools in a bid to promote adult education, professional development and applied research and to impact creativity. In its venture with MetLife, CEP offered a set of interactive workshops to the company's officers, providing participants with the tools necessary to apply financial concepts to real-life business and personal situations.

“CEP's collaboration with a company of the stature of MetLife is an asset to both institutions, as they share a common vision – that of change.” said Mona Majdalani, assistant provost for Academic Affairs and professor of Mathematics Education.



Meanwhile, through the UEO, LAU reached an agreement with the Lebanese State Security Directorate, whereby the university provides members of the directorate and their families with academic financial assistance in the form of reduced fees for postgraduate studies in all disciplines.

The agreement was signed by the director general of State Security, Brigadier General Tony Saliba, and LAU President Joseph G. Jabbra during a ceremony held at the headquarters of the directorate in Ramlet el Baida. Other attendees included Deputy General Director Brigadier General Samir Sinan, leaders from the university and a number of General Security officers.

"Our meeting is an act of building and integration," said Jabbra in his address. "It is aimed at building the nation and the people through this agreement, which provides the officers of the directorate what they seek in the field of specialized studies in order to meet the challenges of today and the requirements of globalization of tomorrow."

The agreement helps advance the State Security Directorate's priority to raise the level of performance and professionalism through the graduate academic programs that its officers and members will join at LAU.

"The security and intelligence required to safeguard the state call for an umbrella of science and culture that

will strengthen the national message it upholds," said Saliba. "We found this in our agreement with LAU, namely the opportunity to harness the best scientific and academic know-how to serve our nation and better protect our citizens."

This is the latest of several partnerships undertaken by the university to empower Lebanese society and help build a modern state. A cooperation agreement with the Lebanese General Security Directorate executed by UEO provides members and officers of General Security and their families with academic financial assistance in the form of reduced fees for postgraduate studies in all disciplines. Other initiatives have included a three-phase leadership training program implemented by LAU's Outreach and Civic Engagement unit (OCE) in conjunction with the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Development and a training course in gender-based violence conceived and conducted by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World.

"It is our privilege to empower and educate, and to serve those who have the capacity and fortitude to assist in building a better nation for us and our children," said Walid Touma, the director of UEO.





Community By Design

By Jhila Prentis

SArD students help beautify the country, one project at a time

"It's really useful to be able to apply what we've learned in class on a larger scale."

On a sunny morning in Byblos, the courtyard of Collège de l'Ange Gardien is buzzing with activity. Students from the School of Architecture and Design's Foundation Program are busy scraping and cleaning the school's perimeter wall. Over three days, they will be painting a large mural, the culmination of an extensive project in two-dimensional studies that saw them engaging with various principles of design, composition and color theory.

This project follows two similar ones done last year: the first in which students created a mural on the wall of a bridge in Byblos, and the second in which they painted interiors in the Collège de l'Ange Gardien. The idea is to get students out of the classroom and applying their creative skills in a real-world setting, the benefits of which can be felt both by the community and the rising artists doing the painting. "It's really useful to be able to apply what we've learned in class on a larger scale," notes one student, who aims to continue his studies in architecture at LAU following the completion of his foundation year.

The final design for the exterior mural was chosen by a panel of jurors, including Department of Art and Design Associate Chair Melissa Plourde Khoury, Director of the Foundation Program Silia Abou Arbid, and the principal of Collège de l'Ange Gardien. Each student presented a hand-painted 90 x 30 cm canvas that they had developed over the first half of the fall semester. One final design was selected based on "feasibility, quality and ease of repetition," Plourde Khoury says.

The project sees the transformation of the wall outside the school's main gate into a vibrant geometric pattern designed by Foundation Program student Jennifer

Frangieh. Working on the courtyard floor, she hand mixes 30 different colors to be used on the wall and pours them into labeled containers. She explains the process behind her winning design: "I started off with points randomly placed on a canvas, which I connected with lines, and then I mirrored it to create repetition. I started with just the color blue and then added orange to create a transition through the color purple."

The process of translating the piece from a small to a large scale presented new design challenges for the students. "It was actually quite difficult to create a smooth transition," Frangieh says.

"They get to see the project evolve, which is important," says Plourde Khoury. "It's also a community project, in which we are working with another educational institution." This, she says, gives students the opportunity to work as a group and collaborate within their community, a key in any creative industry.

Once they have scraped and primed the walls with white paint, students begin painting under Plourde Khoury's guidance. "First we draw out guidelines using masking tape, and then we can start layering the colors," she notes.

Earlier, the students repainted the perimeter wall connected to the wall next to the main gate, creating a lead-up to the mural and a new dramatic entrance for the school.

While working, the students engage in jovial chatter with each other and their instructors. The mural project represents another instance of LAU's long-term commitment to instilling a sense of community in students and encouraging them to work within their local context.

Tapping Lebanon's Oil and Gas Riches

By Brooke Anderson

The School of Engineering is training tomorrow's natural-resource experts

Lebanon lies at the doorstep of immense natural resources. Finding them was one thing, but extracting them requires a great amount of specialized expertise and skills, said Ramadan Ghalayini, exploration consultant and project manager with the Lebanese Petroleum Administration and the Ministry of Energy and Water.

Ghalayini spoke at a seminar hosted by LAU's School of Engineering on the Byblos campus in late fall 2017, during which he gave a detailed presentation on oil exploration and explained the uncertainties the industry is facing.

"The majority of people who hear the news from the media about hydrocarbon reserves are unaware of the great

uncertainties associated with estimating them," said Ghalayini. "Only geologists and explorationists are aware of the challenges inherent in the calculation process."

Nicolas Farah, assistant professor of Engineering, agrees. "As the students will be future petroleum engineers working on extracting hydrocarbon from the ground, they must know what are the uncertainties in the business." That is why he encourages his students to learn about complementary disciplines in their field, such as geology.

The topic of oil and gas is big in Lebanon now, as, over the past several years, the Levant basin has emerged as an international deep-water gas province. More than 70 trillion cubic feet of natural gas have already been discovered, following the detection of giant reservoirs in the eastern Mediterranean. With the help of seismic data, additional discoveries off the coast of Lebanon are also possible in the coming years.

Indeed, explorations in 2010 indicated the likelihood of significant finds off the coast of Lebanon, estimated at 100 trillion cubic feet of gas and 865 barrels of oil. If these expectations are confirmed, production would likely start sometime in the next five to 10 years.

Because of the great wealth that oil and gas extraction bring, progress has been swift. On February 9, Lebanon signed the first agreement on offshore oil and gas

exploration and production at a ceremony in Beirut. An international consortium of energy companies is expected to start drilling in Lebanon's Exclusive Economic Zone at some point in 2019.

LAU has been preparing for this. It is one of several universities across the country that began offering courses in petroleum engineering following the discoveries of the Mediterranean's oil and gas reserves.

The regulation of Lebanon's oil and gas sector is set by the cabinet, the Ministry of Energy and Water, and the Lebanese Petroleum Administration. Once reserves are discovered and tapped, it will open the door to a plethora of new job opportunities in Lebanon – from welders to divers, from mechanics to engineers – as skilled local workers will be in demand for such positions.

It is for this reason that Ghalayini, Farah and other experts are encouraging LAU students to gather as much general knowledge on the sector as possible, particularly during this preliminary stage.

"Petroleum engineering students must understand the language of the explorationists and understand that their model is neither perfect nor accurate, which will ultimately affect their business and drilling," Ghalayini said.

"When the engineer is aware of the difficulties, he will better perform his job and better assess the risk during drilling."

LAU is one of several universities across the country that began offering courses in petroleum engineering following the discoveries of the Mediterranean's oil and gas reserves.





A New Rent Law, A New Urban Dynamic

FEATURE



With rents increasing and supply low, experts call on the Lebanese government to protect landlords and tenants

By Reem Maghribi

Living in Lebanon can be a pricey endeavor. With rents increasing and demand for medium-sized apartments outpacing supply, many have had to search for housing further and further outside the country's major cities.

In Beirut, post-war reconstruction and gentrification have driven up rental costs and property prices significantly over the past two decades. More recently, these trends have been compounded by an influx of refugees, which has brought with it a high demand for rental properties already in limited supply due in large part to a rent-control law enacted at the end of World War II.

Up until then, landlords had enjoyed a competitive market that saw rental contracts renegotiated every year. In 1944, however, a tenancy law designed to protect the large rural and mountainous populations that had moved into the cities at the end of the French mandate essentially granted renters, and subsequently their heirs, the right to extend their leases regardless of the wishes of the landlord.

That was bad news for landlords, but the worst was yet to come as the value of the Lebanese Pound plummeted in the early 1980s, while old contracts written up in the currency remained official. After a few decades, as discussions about eliminating rent control gained traction, tenants still benefiting from it were paying less than five percent of market value for their homes.

Following the enactment of Law Number 160 in 1992, new tenants who signed contracts no longer benefited from rent control, resulting in a schism between those who signed leases before and after the law's passage. New three-year contracts with rates determined by a free-market economy became the norm. This, coupled with limited employment opportunities and low incomes, put a heavy financial burden on hundreds of thousands of Beirut residents.

Meanwhile, the tens of thousands of tenants paying old rent were living in increasingly deteriorating conditions as their landlords refused or were unable to invest in renovations to their properties.



The collapse of an old-rent building in 2012 due to insufficient maintenance resulted in at least 27 deaths and gave impetus to calls for reform of rental law. This led to a new law being passed in 2017 that will see rent protection phased out, bringing about an increase in rates on affected contracts over six years and a return to a free-market economy more in line with the neoliberal policies of the state.

The phasing out of rent control is not, however, likely to improve the living conditions of those who used to benefit from it, says Roula Khoury, assistant professor at LAU's School of Architecture and Design. "Unable to afford market-value rents, they will either move in with relatives, move to smaller apartments, or leave the city," says Khoury. "This will result in a cramped and unhealthy environment for many."

And while reform of the rent law was necessary, phasing out rent control is not enough, says Chairperson of the Economics Department Ghassan Dibeh. "A new system is needed that promotes longer-term contracts. The insecurity inherent to the three-year rental contracts is part of what pushes people toward

ownership, which has become a national and individual obsession in Lebanon." As most Lebanese families whose incomes come from inside the country cannot afford to buy, they take out housing loans, the obligations of which make up a high percentage of their earnings.

"This system is highly unstable both at the individual and economy-wide levels. We need to develop an efficient long-term rental market that would provide an alternative to ownership," adds Dibeh, noting that a decrease in obstacles to people getting housing loans is adding to the fragility of the economy.

While many seem to expect that the increased property supply resulting from the abolition of rent control will remedy the problem by lowering both rent rates and property prices, this is unlikely, says Khoury. "Prices have not gone down over the past 15 years. They might go down a little now, but it's more likely that they plateau before they go up again," says the architect, explaining that instead of an increase in the supply of rental properties, Beirut will probably see an increase in the sale and demolition of old-rent buildings. BeirutEvictions.org, a website dedicated to documenting and mapping the fate

of old-rent buildings, supports Khoury's concerns.

"Many properties are already empty. It is very visible in the city. Owners are waiting to sell their properties to investors who will most probably build luxury developments," says Khoury. "Restoration is very expensive, and with no incentive for owners to restore, it's more likely they'll wait until they can sell or afford to demolish themselves. It's already happening. Hamra is practically vacant."

Moreover, with little government oversight, the new developments being built in place of the old buildings are stripping the capital of its identity. Khoury, who specialized in urban planning in the US, believes government intervention is essential if the problem is to be remedied. She proposes the introduction of a rent cap and urban-planning strategies. "We tend to think that US cities are more sensitive to the market because of their capitalism, but Beirut as a city is more capitalistic than US cities in its formation and planning, even more so than New York. It responds to the market, and that's all it does."

As in Lebanon, rent control first appeared in New York in the 1940s, when



Experts are calling on the government to pass legislation to protect against property demolition, over-development and gentrification.

soldiers returning from World War II sought accommodation, leading to drastic rises in rates. Similar to Beirut, the benefit of rent stabilization in New York has been under great scrutiny. The fact that half the apartments in the borough of Manhattan are subject to rent stabilization has, many argue, priced those not lucky enough to live in them out of the city entirely, because rent in the rest of the boroughs' properties is determined by a highly competitive market.

In Beirut, the number of people who can afford artificially high rents is limited, and with the city's old-rent tenants forced out and new properties being bought predominantly by investors from

abroad, the capital is at risk of losing its economically and socially diverse population.

However, it may be many years yet before the city loses all its old-rent tenants, as half the estimated 170,000 left may benefit from a planned government fund for the underprivileged. That fund has yet to materialize, though, and the application of the new rent law has been largely suspended.

With the lack of decisive state intervention on either party's behalf, emotions erupt on occasion.

Both tenants and landlords took to the streets after the new rent law was drafted in 2012, delaying its official approval by parliament for five years. While landlords argued that they were being handicapped by significant loss of income and an inability to rightfully benefit from their properties, tenants argued that a lack of social welfare and inflated market rates would leave them in the cold. The societal division was marked, not between rich and poor but between lucky and unlucky.

"Over 50 years, our tenant has paid \$7,000. Now they got an additional \$13,000 in compensation. Is this justice?" says landlord Robert Kahale, referring to

a payout of \$20,000 he made in order to evict his tenant under compensation rules included within the new law. Such compensation options were also included in caveats within the old rent law that restrictively enabled landlords in need to reclaim their properties.

"I paid \$100,000 to the landlord and the same amount to the old-rent tenant in order to buy the property tenant-free," says an investor who bought an apartment in Beirut in 2012, before the new law was passed. "I was shocked at how rundown the apartment was. Despite paying next to nothing in rent, the tenants hadn't in all those years invested in hot water for the kitchen."

Those who supported the old rent law may not have anticipated the societal chasm that would last for almost 30 years thereafter. With the danger of all but the wealthy being pushed out of Beirut, experts are calling on the government to pass legislation to protect against property demolition, over-development and gentrification. This will protect the identity of Beirut and allow its diverse and dynamic population to stay put. ■

Room with a Future

By Raissa Batakji

A quick check-in on the state of Lebanese hotels in the face of a growing sharing economy and how they can rise to the challenge

It was only a matter of time from the first friend request until someone figured out how they could turn online socializing into a lucrative business: peer-to-peer sharing.

The sharing economy – the system through which services bought or bartered for via the Internet – has grown exponentially over the past ten years, ushering in a massive change in practically all forms of traditional exchange, from backyard sales to hailing a cab. The introduction of early platforms such as Craigslist meant that people could sell anything they own, from real estate to kitchenware, without having to share the profit with an agent. This inevitably translated into bad news for traditional service providers, such as hotels.

Indeed, the hotel industry has been particularly impacted by the sharing economy. Though only 10 years ago Airbnb did not exist, today the accommodation-renting service has already hosted over 200 million guests, offering more rooms than any hotel chain. It is present in more than 65,000 cities around the world, Beirut included.

Taken at face value, this has unfavorable implications for hotels across the world.

Well not quite – at least not yet.

“The Lebanese market is largely dominated by luxurious hotels with a clientele that seeks consistent service quality, such as personalized customer service through loyalty cards, among others,” Haddad noted.

AKSOB Interim Dean Said Ladki agrees: “Since most high-end hotels’ revenue comes from business stays as opposed to low-budget travelers or families, who are the primary users of platforms such as Airbnb, they do not have much competition to worry about.”

On the global level, however, hotels have had to step up their game in order to combat the threat from Airbnb and similar platforms. Governments across the world have also intervened to block the use of Airbnb and comparable services, as governments get left out of tax revenue collected by the renters.

Here in Lebanon, the Ministry of Tourism has not brought about any such regulations yet, but El Haddad assumes “they will catch up with the trend very soon.”

Meanwhile, local hotels have made some adaptations to the tightening market. Some have made their websites more attractive, intuitive and user friendly. Potential guests can now see pictures of the room they’re about to book, enjoy many more “instagrammable” amenities, and take advantage of an array of services that did not exist 10 years ago.

Other hotels have gone further and are actually partnering with shared-economy platforms. Some small, family-run hotels, mostly in rural Lebanon, have listed their rooms on Airbnb and are happy with the new wave of clientele that’s coming their way.

The best ways for traditional hotels to compete, said El Haddad, is “to create opportunities for more sought-after, unique experiences, provide family-friendly activities, and offer packages to attract Airbnb guests.”

Perhaps there’s plenty to learn, but there’s also plenty of hope. “A good number of Lebanese hotels have survived one political conflict after the other, so business competition might prove less of a challenge,” Ladki concluded.



“The Lebanese market is largely dominated by luxurious hotels with a clientele that seeks consistent service quality, such as personalized service.”

“The emergence of Airbnb as a sharing platform is both a remarkable and a novel development that poses a threat to the economic sustainability of the hotel industry,” said Rania El Haddad, associate professor of Hospitality Management at the Adnan Kassab School of Business (AKSOB).

While a host at Airbnb does not necessarily suffer if their listing is not rented out during a period of time, a hotel would, due to unavoidable running costs.

Going “Soft”

By Dana K. Haffar

Soft-skills workshops empower students on the professional and personal levels

Besides the standard qualifications listed on a CV, there are less obvious, abstract skills that employers look for in job candidates. What they are and tips on how to cultivate them are treated in a series of workshops across both LAU campuses, initiated last year by the Outreach and Civic Engagement Unit (OCE).

The goal of the Soft Skills Series, said Elie Samia, assistant vice president of OCE, “is to impart the intellectual density and emotional intelligence that the youth need to succeed in their lives.”

Also known as “transferrable” and “professional” skills, soft skills are those traits that set a desirable candidate apart from one who is simply qualified – that is, someone who only possesses technical knowledge or “hard skills.” Integrity, flexibility, professionalism, interpersonal and communication skills, problem-solving and leadership ability, and work ethic rank high on recruiters’ lists.



According to a study by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation and Stanford Research Center, “85 percent of job success comes from having well-developed soft and people skills, and only 15 percent of job success comes from technical skills and knowledge (hard skills).” The findings were drawn, in part, from *A Study of Engineering Education* by Charles Riborg Mann, published as far back as 1918 by the Carnegie Foundation, which revealed the pivotal role character plays in professions as specialized as engineering, law and medicine.

The interactive workshops have so far explored alternative communication skills, time and stress management, emotional intelligence, debate and interviewing skills, customer service, and business ethics, to name a few – delivered by handpicked professionals.

Speakers offering a wide spectrum of perspectives have included entrepreneurs Elie Daher and Maha Fadel; doctors Michel Khoury, Michel Nawfal and Zeina Ghossoub El-Aswad; trainer and consultant Samer Taher; Walid Abboud of MTV news; executive director and consultant Fayez El Helou; editor-in-chief of Executive Magazine and member of the advisory board at the Adnan Kassar School of Business Yasser Akkaoui; and Assil Ayyach, LAU instructor of Oral Communication.

Sessions on negotiation, interpersonal skills and body language proved invaluable to second-year Nutrition major Reem El Helou. “It’s important to know how to communicate with people of different ages and different backgrounds,” she said.

“Eighty-five percent of job success comes from having well-developed soft and people skills.”

The interactive workshops continue to draw crowds of students from various disciplines eager to learn how best to present and manage themselves in a professional environment. Information and tips gained from the sessions, they agree, have contributed substantially to their professional and personal growth.

“The workshops give us the chance to investigate topics and work on our skills, because we need them in both our work and personal lives,” said Ali Moussawi, a second-year Economics student with a minor in Computer Science. “They are fundamental to anything we do in our future careers – how to communicate with others, with peers, with people around us. All hold equal importance.”

With many more insights to come, the Soft Skills Series engineered by OCE is ongoing, serving – in Samia’s words – to “ignite the sparks of youth empowerment through well-canvassed and tailor-made workshops to help them discover their voice in life.”

Campusnotes

For more details about these LAU activities, visit the news section of www.lau.edu.lb.

An education for all

The El Khalil Foundation, a non-profit NGO established by the El Khalil family, has gifted LAU with \$100,000 toward an annual scholarship grant. The major gift, made official in the fall, aims to help financially disadvantaged yet academically deserving students from the Hasbaya District in the south of Lebanon. Already the El Khalil Foundation Annual Scholarship Grant is making a major impact on youth from that district, with 19 LAU students benefiting from the donation so far. "Our gift marks our commitment to support students in need to receive the most important tools that will help them become self-sufficient and will enable them to contribute to the society they live in," said foundation board member Imad El-Khalil. "The El Khalil Foundation strongly believes in the power of education and that this should be made available to all regardless of their means."

"Gifts toward LAU's various annual scholarship funds provide the university with the resources needed to maintain its promise of making a university education a reality for thousands of economically disadvantaged students who deserve a spot at our institution," said Assistant Vice President for Development Nassib N. Nasr.



Our youngest learners

Educators from 80 Lebanese schools made their way to Irwin Hall on LAU's Beirut campus to attend a seminar hosted by the Department of Education on "Kindergarten Classroom Teaching Tips." Organized by All Prints Distributors and Publishers, the workshop, which was held on November 11, focused on education in early childhood, an often overlooked but incredibly important period in children's brain development. "LAU is committed to actively raising the quality of education for children in particular," Chair of the Department of Education Iman Osta told the attendees. "Our mission is to provide step-by-step assistance to any event that contributes to this mission and vision." LAU has been a pioneer in the field, with a number of degrees in early childhood education and the first and only nursery school in the region affiliated with an academic institution.



A gender perspective on inclusion

Achieving self-knowledge and respecting others brings women power. That's one of the messages US activist and author Manal Omar conveyed to her audience during her graduate seminar "Middle Eastern Topics on Pluralism and the Inclusive State," held on LAU's Beirut campus on November 10. Sponsored by the Institute for Social Justice and Conflict Resolution, the talk aimed to bring students "a gender perspective on inclusion," said Imad Salamey, associate professor of Political Science and International Affairs and associate chair at the Department of Social Sciences. "It's like breaking that barrier," Omar told the attendees, who included women from Yemen, Syria, Bahrain and Lebanon. "When you are not afraid to be strong but to also recognize that there is a lot of strength in the feminine."

Research and education in the Arab world

As part of the Department of Communication Arts' #ReinventCommunication campaign, the Multimedia Journalism program organized a workshop with Al-Fanar Media focused on the coverage of research and education in the Arab world. The event, which took place on the Beirut campus on November 14, drew journalists and researchers from Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia and Syria, in addition to a number of LAU students and staff. Al-Fanar Editor David Wheeler said there is interest among Arab reporters for specialized journalism, but that there is a lack of experience in this domain. "I think that many journalists are tired of endlessly writing about politics, and they do understand that education and research are long-term solutions for the problems of Arab countries."



Taking care of business schools

For the first time ever, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) chose Lebanon as the site of its MENA Advisory Board meetings and seminars in mid-November. These were held across both LAU campuses and delivered in coordination with the Adnan Kassar School of Business (AKSOB), which received accreditation in April of last year. AKSOB Interim Dean Said Ladki said that he and others at the school were “delighted to talk about its accreditation

journey and showcase the learning resources and facilities available on both campuses.” The fact that AACSB held its MENA Advisory Board meetings and seminars at LAU, said Provost George K. Najjar, “speaks to the pivotal role of LAU as a leading regional center of business education. This is the first time a series of events on this scale takes place in Lebanon, with participants coming from nearly a dozen countries.”

A celebration of literature

Students buzzed around the Upper Gate of the Beirut campus during the Literature Day event, an afternoon of fun and games hosted by the Department of English in collaboration with the Page Turners Book Club on November 17. Organizers had four game booths set up, each representing a different cultural era or literary movement: Islamic-era literature, Greek mythology, the Renaissance and Enlightenment, and last but not least, Harry Potter. The organizers, many of whom were dressed in costumes donated by the campus theater, used Literature Day to inform people about the English Department’s program, which includes an emphasis on literature, language and creative writing. Associate Professor of Cultural Studies, English and Comparative Literature Kristiaan Aercke, who was dressed as a 17th-century gentleman, was enthused by students’ energy and involvement in the games. “We think this is important because it makes students aware that literature is not boring, that literature is alive,” he said. The department plans to hold a similar Literature Day event on campus every year.



Tell your tale

Why do we tell stories? To make sense of the world and our place in it. With that, IMAGINE Workshop and Concert Series (IWCS) kicked off its second residency, “Tell Your Tale,” with Alia Alzougbi, a BAFTA-nominated storyteller. The events, which took place from November 20 to 24 and were held on both the Beirut and Byblos campuses, included a storytelling workshop and two performances by Alzougbi. The program concluded with a trip to the Shatila refugee camp outside Beirut, where kids between 9 and 13 had the chance to play, sing and tell stories of their own. “This is the first time I work with a university in the Arab world in this manner,” said Alzougbi. “For me, this is the beginning of a new venture. [It is like] bringing the Arab world back to the Arab world.”



Food for thought

LAU students, faculty and visiting scholars gathered on Beirut campus November 21 for an introduction to a recently conducted study into the physical and mental health needs of transgender women in Lebanon. The talk was hosted by the Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) as part of their monthly Food4Thought series, which aims to encourage youths to consider and debate diverse issues related to gender. This desire to promote an inclusive environment and mentality among the student population of LAU is what drives the series, said IWSAW Director Lina Abirafeh, adding, “It’s a platform to showcase ordinary women who have done extraordinary things.”

A course in simulation

Twenty-two people were honored at a diploma ceremony for graduates of LAU’s Clinical Simulation Center (LAU-CSC) program on November 25 at the Chagoury Health Sciences Center on the Byblos campus. The honorees were medical specialists from LAU and other Lebanese universities, as well as professionals from across the region who had completed the course as part of their professional development and advancement. The Clinical Simulation Program was established in 2009 to teach doctors, nurses and pharmacists new medical techniques using interaction with standardized patients and simulation exercises, such as practice on mannequins and other training devices, with the aim of promoting safe and effective patient care and advancing science.

Strength in diversity

One of Lebanon’s strengths is its diversity. That was the message celebrated at the Diversity is Power reception hosted on November 29 by the Aie Club in honor of prolific Lebanese artist George Khabbaz. “We all know diversity is a necessity in any workplace. It creates a platform for knowledge accumulation and collection,” said Majd El Fakih, president of the LAU chapter of Aie Club, in front of a full-house audience at the Irwin Auditorium on Beirut campus. Khabbaz – an actor, director, playwright, musician and producer – read one of his most famous poems to the rapt audience before giving the stage to the other honored guest, Minister of Culture and surgeon Dr. Ghattas Khoury. At the root of the strength and resilience of the Lebanese nation is “our commitment to family and home,” said Khoury, adding that despite Lebanon not having the budget to compete with the national cultural institutions in the Gulf nations, “I am not down, because we have the likes of George Khabbaz to enrich our country.”



Election preparation

As Lebanon gears up for its first parliamentary elections since 2009, the Department of Social Sciences at the Lebanese American University organized a conference on the “Effectiveness of Electoral Laws in Securing Fair Representation: Countries in Transition,” in collaboration with the Arab Network for Democratic Elections (ANDE). The conference, which took place December 7 and 8 on LAU’s Byblos campus, brought together Lebanese, Arab and European diplomats in addition to experts and academics

from Jordan, Palestine, Kuwait, Yemen, Sudan, Algeria, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. Chair of the Department of Social Sciences and Associate Professor Marwan Rowayheb noted that the timing of the conference was important because Lebanon is still in “the process of drafting and implementing the electoral law.” At the same time, the Arab world is “going through a transition, and one of the basic cornerstones for democratization is to draft an electoral law that provides fair and free elections.”



King for a day

In late November, 450 less-fortunate children from across Lebanon descended on LAU's Byblos campus for a day of games, dancing, food and gifts. The event, LAU Orphan Fair, was put together by Campus Activities Associate Manager Alan Kairouz and his team, with Rebecca Saab as the main organizer. Events of this size require a lot of help, and this year it was provided by over 150 volunteers representing 30 university clubs, as well as community-service students and alumni. The orphans were delighted, and many wanted to stay after the event ended. One little boy seemed sad to be leaving at the end of the day, but said with a smile, "I hope to be back here next year." For their part, the student volunteers felt they gained as much as they gave. Karen Malhame of the American Society of Civil Engineers-LAU student chapter said after the event, "At the end of the day, we found out that we went home richer. Without knowing, the kids brought joy and gratefulness into our lives."



Elevating media education and journalism

One of LAU's biggest conferences of the year took place on December 8 and 9, when over 400 attendees, who together represented 20 universities and dozens of media institutions and civil-society organizations, descended on the Beirut campus for the first academic conference of the Association of Media Educators in Lebanon (MedLeb). Over 40 speakers – among them educators, journalists and politicians – presented on media education, research and production. The conference was held under the patronage of Lebanese Information Minister Melhem Riachy and was co-sponsored by Deutsche Welle Akademie and the European Union. The Department of Communication Arts, which hosted the event, formed the MedLeb association after the information minister called for Lebanese universities to propose ideas for raising the quality of media education and journalism in the country.

A forum for student expression

LAU's Department of Communication Arts held its bi-annual Student Film Screening December 19 on Beirut campus, an event that has over the past decade become a forum for students to express their ideas through short films, documentaries, and critical video productions. This year the screening included productions from seven courses, among which Media and Society, Advanced Cinematography, and Introduction to Audiovisual Media. The topics of the films included mental illness, sexual harassment, freedom of the press, and stereotypes of Syrian refugees in Lebanese and Arab media. In total, 30 films were shown at the event, all representing a recent growth in the quality of productions released by LAU students. "There was an increase in the number of award-winning productions and in the diversity of productions," department Chairperson Jad Melki said.

A holiday gift to the poor

Every year the Nursing Club, based at the Alice Ramez Chagoury School of Nursing on Byblos campus, collects non-perishable food to donate to disadvantaged families in the area at Christmas time. This year, club members and their faculty leaders collected around 150 kilos of food – much higher than their previous hauls – and donated it to the organization Bonheur du Ciel, a local charity founded by Father Majdi Al Alawi. The charity operates a restaurant in Byblos that serves free, hot meals to the poor. A few days before Christmas, members of the Nursing Club helped hand out the meals and delivered their donation of non-perishables to the charity's pantry. This helped ensure a merry – and full – Christmas for those in need.





Young athletes shine

Lebanon's top high-school athletes converged at LAU in mid-January for two weeks of sports matches, as part of the LAU High Schools Invitational Sports Tournament, jointly organized by the Beirut and Byblos athletics departments. It was university's 19th year of hosting 52 high schools from across Lebanon in competitions for girls' and boys' basketball, volleyball, mini football, swimming, tennis and table tennis. The games gave young athletes a chance to play competitively, and in some cases get a shot at sports scholarships to the university.

By design

Students showed off their work to classmates, faculty, staff and visitors at the Design III Studiowork Exhibition. The event showcased work by School of Architecture and Design students, produced in six different sections that took place on both campuses. The exhibition took place in the Safadi Fine Arts Building on the Beirut campus from January 22 to 26.



Mission ACCOMPLISHED

More than two dozen representatives of NGOs from across Lebanon gathered at the LAU Executive Center @ Solidere for the concluding ceremony of the "ACCOMPLISHED" Leadership Certification Program. The event, which took place on January 30, marked participants' achievement as the first cohort of the Outreach and Leadership Academy (OLA) to be held at LAU Solidere. At the ceremony, President of the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Development MP Bahia Hariri congratulated the graduates, saying that she hoped "they would use the skills they have learned to move Lebanese NGOs toward higher levels of professionalism."



The gift of sight

Doctors from the LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital's Department of Ophthalmology traveled to villages across Lebanon to do free eye screenings as part of a campaign to raise awareness about health conditions affecting vision. In collaboration with the Arz Foundation, a team led by Dr. Ama Sadaka held its first screening on February 3 in the village of Anet. The team screened 60 patients, all over the age of 50. "It is our responsibility to serve our community and to be role models to our residents-in-training and our medical students," said Sadaka. "Medical-screening campaigns are extremely important to educate people about preventive medicine and early detection of diseases, as well to as expose our students to community service."

Speak your mind

Even though many are terrified of public speaking, 12 young people from eight Lebanese universities, including LAU, were brave enough to participate in the 18th annual National Public Speaking competition hosted by the Department of English in collaboration with the Lebanon branch of the English-Speaking Union (ESU). The theme of the event, which took place January 14 on the Beirut campus, was "The Only Way to Predict the Future is to Invent It." "This is a very good platform for students to be exposed to voicing their opinion without being judged for the stand they take," said organizer and Assistant Professor of Oral Communication and English Nabelah Haraty.

Mind your manners

When it comes to doing business, form matters as much as function. On January 25, LAU's Alumni Relations Office hosted etiquette expert Balsam Al Khalil to speak to attendees about the importance of following protocol in business. Al Khalil is chief representative officer for Bank of Beirut in the UAE and the Gulf. She has degrees in law and business protocol and has studied fashion styling and image consultancy. At the event, she covered professional behavior and appearance, decoding different communication styles, mastering dining etiquette, and more. Al Khalil's expertise helped attendees understand just how important appearance and manners are in the world of business.

Music for peace

The chant of children from Katermaya and Shatila refugee camps reverberated through the Gulbenkian Theater on LAU's Beirut campus, marking the first event of the IMAGINE Workshop and Concerts Series (IWCS) in its third residency, Salaam. The young chorus opened for a concert by international group Apple Hill String Quartet and renowned Syrian clarinet player and composer Kinan Azmeh on February 15.

In this IWCS residency, music served as a tool for peace, not only to reach out to the community, but more importantly to showcase the singing talents of the children from the two camps.

Success and Giving Back: An Interview with Wissam Moukahal

By Razan Ayoub



LAU speaks with the alum and Forbes Middle East Top-100 Exec

Wissam Moukahal (BA '95) has been a major player in the finance industry almost since leaving his beloved alma mater, LAU. Today he is not only the executive chairman-MENA for the financial powerhouse Macquarie Capital, but he was also included on the Forbes Middle East list of Top 100 Executives in the Arab World.

LAU spoke to Moukahal about his extraordinary career, his charity work, and what LAU taught him about success.

How did your time at LAU influence your career?

LAU has and will always play a significant role in my professional development. This great university provided me with remarkable academic and personal experiences both inside and outside of its classrooms. Professors, alumni, staff and students all played a major part in providing me with a truly rounded education and in arming me with the tools and knowledge I needed to navigate the challenges inherent in my profession.

The best days of my youth were spent at LAU in spite of the many challenges that I faced along my academic journey. Today, it is heartwarming for me to see LAU evolve into one of the most prominent educational institutions in the region and to know that somehow I share in its story and success.

What inspired you to create the Z. Moukahal Foundation?

The motivation that drove the creation of the Z. Moukahal Foundation is rooted in a truly personal experience. Early on in my time at LAU, my family passed through severe financial difficulties that threatened my ability to continue my studies. Fortunately, I was able to benefit from the financial aid program at LAU, working an average of 180 hours per semester at the guidance office. My uncle Sami, may his soul rest in peace, and subsequently his sons and daughters represented by my youngest cousin Jihad

stepped in to cover the rest of my tuition fees. Had it not been for the support I received from both the university and my family, I would not have been able to earn my bachelor's degree. Simply put, I would not be where I am today.

The Z. Moukahal Foundation is driven by the desire to give back to Lebanese youth and the society on a larger scale by investing in the education of underprivileged individuals, thus providing them with the skills and support to better their chances of professional success.

Our mission is to nurture the talent and ambitions of underprivileged Lebanese youth and to support the creation of a bright, prosperous and educated Lebanon of tomorrow.

What do you think makes Lebanon's banking industry stand out in the region?

People, people, people. Lebanese are good bankers by nature. In spite of the turbulent geo-political conditions in the country, the banking industry, driven by a qualified pool of local talent, has managed to stay afloat, time and again.

Do you believe Lebanon can one day style itself as a major financial hub in the Levant, the way Abu Dhabi – the regional HQ of Macquarie Capital – has done with the Gulf?

What Lebanon as a country lacks in stability, we more than make up for in

human talent, and this bodes well for the future. Political security notwithstanding, Lebanon has all the key elements required to attract capital and thus position itself as an internationally recognized financial hub.

What advice can you give to LAU students interested in finance to reach the level of success you have achieved?

To think global. The world has become smaller due to globalization and rapid advancements in technology. Unlike during my time at university, students today are competing with international counterparts, so differentiation has never been more important.

What skills have you honed to help you become such a major player in your industry?

An extremely driven person is also one likely to make mistakes. I have often found, in a career that has spanned 22 years of serving clients, that the will to succeed can only bear fruit if leavened with patience. Patience is not only a virtue but can be viewed as a skill as well. To this day, I am still learning how to be more patient by always making a conscious effort to take a step back and allow my endeavors the time needed to reach their full potential.

Alumni update

November 2017



New England Chapter Gatherings

Members of the New England Alumni Chapter and friends gathered for brunch at Anoushella Kitchen in Boston on November 5, a week after having met up at the Tiffany Ballroom at the Four Points Sheraton in Norwood, MA, for a banquet honoring Maronite Patriarch and Cardinal Bechara Boutros al-Rai.

The Power of Play Lecture

The Alumni Relations Office organized the first installment of the Keep Learning Alumni Lecture Series for this academic year. Educator, scholar and trainer Mahmoud Natout gave a talk on November 10 about harnessing the power of play to unlock human potential for innovation. The event attracted more than 130 alumni and friends.



Abu Dhabi Chapter Alumni Get-Together

The Cho Gao Marina Walk at the Intercontinental Hotel in Abu Dhabi was the site of a get-together held by the Alumni Relations Office and the Abu Dhabi Alumni Chapter. LAU President Dr. Joseph G. Jabbra was a distinguished guest at the November 28 event. It was an opportunity for alumni living in the emirate to network with each other, with Abu Dhabi Alumni Chapter Committee members, and with LAU officials.

Dubai & NE Chapter Thank You Dinner

President Jabbra and the Dubai & NE Alumni Chapter held a dinner for the chapter's sponsors in appreciation of their continuous support to LAU and higher education. The dinner took place on November 27 at Chez Charles restaurant in Dubai.

Abu Dhabi Chapter Thank You Dinner

President Jabbra and the Abu Dhabi Alumni Chapter held a dinner for the chapter's sponsors in appreciation of their continuous support of LAU students in need of financial aid. The dinner took place on November 28 at Byblos Sur Mer at the Intercontinental Hotel in Abu Dhabi.



BCW Chapter Trip to Fouad Chehab Museum

Members of the LAU-BCW Alumni Chapter organized a visit to the Fouad Chehab Museum and Library in Jounieh on November 29, followed by lunch at Creperie Restaurant.

Holiday Celebration in DC

The AUB, LAU and IC Washington, DC, Alumni Chapters launched their first-ever Holiday Celebration November 30 at Maggiano's Little Italy at Tysons Galleria. More than 100 people attended the celebration, which also featured musical performances from Huda Asfour and Kamyar Arsani.



December 2017



NY-NJ Chapter Holiday Party

The New York-New Jersey Alumni Chapter kicked off the holiday season with their annual holiday party at Casa La Femme in Manhattan on December 2. Dozens of alumni and their family and friends gathered to socialize and enjoy traditional Egyptian cuisine.

Bahrain Chapter Annual Christmas Dinner

The Bahrain Alumni Chapter organized its annual Christmas dinner on December 8 at Señor Paco's restaurant in Manama. More than 80 alumni and friends enjoyed a festive evening.

School of Engineering Chapter Winter Gathering

The LAU School of Engineering Alumni Chapter organized its annual winter gathering on December 22 at Santana Food and Drinks in the Beirut neighborhood of Achrafieh. The event attracted more than 150 alumni and friends.



January 2018



New Student Orientation

Incoming students were greeted with smiles and a small gift at the New Student Orientation event held on both campuses on January 12. They received mugs with "Welcome to LAU 2017-2018" emblazoned on them, along with a leaflet explaining the role of the Alumni Relations Office and alumni chapters worldwide.



Happy Hour in Washington

The Washington, DC, Alumni Chapter shared laughs and good cheer during Happy Hour at Myron Nixon's Pitmaster BBQ in Old Town Alexandria, VA, on January 25.

Business Etiquette for Success

Etiquette consultant Balsam Al Khalil gave a lecture on the importance of protocol, good manners, and communication during a lecture on the Beirut campus. Organized by the Alumni Relations Office, the talk took place on January 25, 2018.



February 2018



Bullyproof Your Child Lecture

Concerned parents, educators and students packed the hall where child safety expert Darine El Masri gave a lecture called Bullyproof Your Child. The event, part of the Stay Aware Lecture Series organized by the Alumni Relations Office, attracted more than 120 alumni and friends who wanted to learn how to prevent and deal with bullying.

Film Screening – *Nour*

In collaboration with the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, the Alumni Relations Office hosted a screening of the film *Nour*, which deals with child marriage. Also present at the February 26 screening were President Jabbra and the film's director, LAU alumnus Khalil Dreyfus Zaarour.

Mini Studio Club for Kids

With the help of the Beirut Alumni Chapter, the cast of the television show *Mini Studio* put on a performance for kids on February 24, on the Beirut campus.

Staying connected

Faten Ali Shehab (BA '89) works in interior design and furniture retail in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. She was formerly a contract project manager at the company Ford Land. She is married to lawyer Hassan Elkhailil and has two sons, Ali, a former soccer player at Georgia State University and current third-year student at Emory Law School in Atlanta, and Jad, who is studying pre-med on a soccer scholarship at Georgia State University with an anticipated graduation date of May 2018.

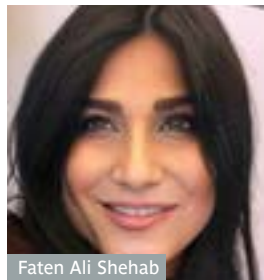
Amani Adib Saad (BA '00) is currently living in Sidon. She has worked as an interior architect, instructor and area manager for a private company after completing a Master of Arts and Sciences at Lebanese University. She has two children.

Wassim Salem (BE '01) is living in Dubai and is married to LAU alumna Lida Antonios. He worked as MENA lead director of infrastructure at AECOM Dubai and is now pursuing other opportunities.

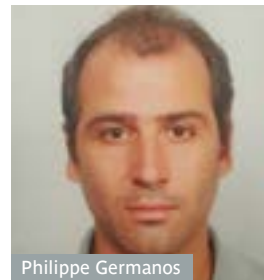
Fadi Mohammad Hashem (MBA '03) received his PhD from Cranfield School of Management in the UK. He works as a senior trainer and consultant. He has trained senior officials in the Qatari government as well as managers at Saudi Telecom. He also works as a consultant with the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He is married to Dina Abdul Rahman and has a son, Mohamad Rafic.

Philippe Germanos (BS '05) owns and manages Guita Bed&Bloom, an eco-friendly guesthouse and organic farm that promotes agritourism, ecotourism and wellness in Akoura. He received his MBA from Insead Business School, based in Fontainebleau, France, and worked as a software developer and then consultant at Murex before launching Guita Bed&Bloom.

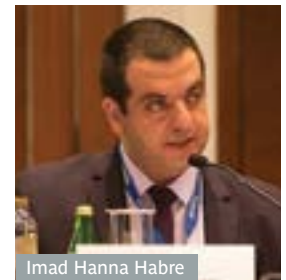
Imad Hanna Habre (BS '06) received an MBA in Finance from the American University of Science and Technology before beginning at IBL Bank as the group head of Internal Control. Imad is a certified anti-money-laundering specialist (CAMS) and recently earned two advanced certifications from the ACAMS association. He also spoke at the ACAMS MENA-region's annual conference in Dubai in 2017, as well as at various events



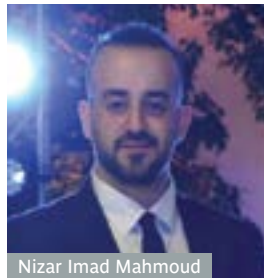
Faten Ali Shehab



Philippe Germanos



Imad Hanna Habre



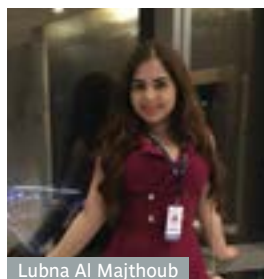
Nizar Imad Mahmoud



Jo Nammour



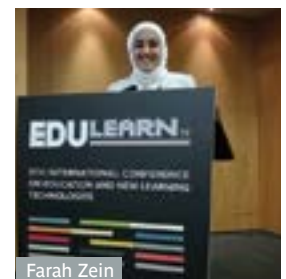
Nizar Al Sankary



Lubna Al Majthoub



Mirella Saab



Farah Zein

conducted by Bureau Van Dijk in Dubai, Cairo, Amman and Beirut on sanctions and financial crimes.

Eli Maroun El-Helou (BE '07) is working as a business development manager at InfoTech Business Solutions (part of MIDIS Group). He lives in Lebanon with his wife and two sons, a two-year-old and a newborn.

Patrick Gharior (BE '07) is founder of Hipernation, a live-streaming business startup. He was formerly a solution architect for Ericsson Telecom. He lives in Beirut.

Selim Salame (BS '08) is living in Switzerland after having received his MSc in International Business Development in 2011 and an EMBA in 2016. He is the current head of advertising at Swatch Headquarters.

Farah AlHashim (BA '09) received an MFA in Filmmaking from the New York Film Academy in 2013 before obtaining an MA in International Affairs in fall 2017. She is currently Kuwait TV's Paris

correspondent and an independent filmmaker, and is working on her PhD.

Patrick Mallouh (BS '09) is living in Dubai. He received a specialized master's in Marketing and Communications from École Supérieure des Affaires & ESCP in Beirut before beginning as a marketing manager for the Public Sector-Middle East & Africa at Amazon Web Services. Previously, he was Middle East brand and communications manager at Deloitte for over eight years.

Marc Chehwane (BS '10) is currently pursuing an Executive MBA at ESA/ESCP Europe. He is working as a business development manager at CDC Group and is chief financial officer for BTPIZ, an industrial zone in Northern Vietnam. He was previously an assistant manager at Ernst & Young. He lives in Doha.

Nizar Imad Mahmoud (MBA '11) began his career by launching the Shallalat Al Barouk Hotel and Restaurant in Lebanon's Chouf region. He is currently a marketing supervisor with McDonald's Lebanon.

Jo Nammour (BA '11) is living in Hazmieh after having completed his certification with the Society for Human Resource Management. He is currently the senior talent acquisition coordinator at GlobeMed Group.

Nizar Al Sankary (BE '12) is living in Syracuse, New York. He received certification from the Project Management Institute in Pennsylvania in 2017 and is currently working toward his master's in Structural Engineering at Syracuse University. After that, he plans to pursue his PhD in Concrete Design. He launched his own business in August 2017 with the construction of a six-story building in Tripoli. He previously worked as an engineer in Cameroon and Saudi Arabia. He is excited to become an uncle in the coming month.

Souhad Sultan (BS '12) is enrolled in the MSc program in International Business and Management at the University of Westminster, London. Souhad was previously a contracts officer at MZ & Partners in Qatar.

Saja Algharib (BArch '13) is a graduate student at the University of Toronto and is working as an intermediate architect at the same time.

Dima Azzam Zeitouni (BS '13) worked for over a year with Medicals International's Vision Care Department in Kuwait. From there she was recruited by her current employer, Johnson & Johnson Vision, where she is the account manager with the biggest portfolio in the UAE. She currently lives in Dubai.

Yasmine Abbas (BS '14) is living in Dubai and working as a corporate communications manager.

Tammy El Hajj (BS '14) began as a humanitarian officer at the Australian Embassy in Beirut before moving to Sydney to work as a case officer with the Protection Team. Tammy is now working for the Australian government in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and has recently gotten married.

Issam Kabbani (BE '14) is currently completing his MBA at the Insead Business School in Fontainebleau, France, where he lives.

Firas Obeid (BS '14) Firas lives in Beirut and works as a treasury, FX and capital markets dealer by day and as a supervisor at the LAU Fitness Center by night. He is applying soon to master's programs. He was proud to represent LAU and Lebanon at the 2014 World Fitness Championship in Las Vegas.

Edmond Shehadi (BE '14) is living in Lebanon now but will be relocating shortly to the Netherlands to begin work on his PhD in Computational Fluid Dynamics. He completed his master's in Computational Science at Uppsala University in Sweden.

Amal Chami (BA '15) received an LLM in International Law from the University of Nottingham in the UK in December 2017, graduating with merit. She worked from 2015 to 2016 for Cedar White Bradley Consultancy and is currently starting a business and job-hunting.

Bassema Abdulrida Houjeij (BArch '15) published her own book of poetry in December 2017, which also featured several of her paintings. She founded Arcadia World in Beirut and moved to Dar el Salaam, Tanzania, where she works in cooperation with her company's Beirut office. She has designed three villas in South Lebanon, a Japanese martial arts center in Equatorial Guinea, and a commercial mall in Luanda, Angola. She is currently designing a hotel in Masaki, Tanzania and got married in July 2017.

Rana Obeid (BE '15) is living in Doha and working as a civil and structural engineer.

Sarah Antoine Succar (BS '15) received an MSc in Athletic Development and Peak Performance at Southampton Solent University, United Kingdom, in 2017. She is currently living in Lebanon and working in medical sales. She has additionally worked as a dietician and sports coach.

Lubna Al Majthoub (BS '16) is currently a teacher with Teach for Lebanon in the West Bekaa and is planning to continue her studies this fall. She attended the Qudwa Global Teachers' Forum, which aims to empower teachers to improve education, in Abu Dhabi in October.

Yahya Al Zein (BE '16) received an MSc in Structural Engineering with distinction from the University of Manchester in the

United Kingdom. He now lives in Bristol, UK, and works as a civil engineer at EDF Energy. He was previously a structural designer at an architecture engineering company.

Zainab Atia (BS '16) worked as a marketing coordinator after graduating from LAU and is working toward an MSc in Management Consulting at University of Leeds, UK.

Hussein Basma (BE '16) completed his MSc in Automotive Engineering at the IFP School, a graduate engineering institution in Rueil-Malmaison, France. He now lives between Paris and Byblos and is working on his PhD in a joint program between LAU and Mines ParisTech.

Oussama El Assir (BArch '16) is a first-year student with Advanced Standing in the Master of Architecture program at the University of Toronto. Oussama is also working as a research assistant at the university.

Mirella Saab (BArch '16) completed her master's in Business Design at Domus Academy in Milan, Italy, and is now working as a real estate consultant at Coldwell Banker, an international luxury real estate agency. She lives in Paris.

Farah Zein (MBA '16) is a school IT administrator in Lebanon. Her MBA thesis was accepted at the EduLearn Conference-Barcelona, where Farah presented among 88 participants from different countries. She will soon be applying to PhD programs.

Line Itani (BA '17) Line is currently the project coordinator and visual communicator at the NGO APEAL. She recently won Best Short Film at the European Film Festival's Lebanon Students' Short Film Awards for her LAU senior movie *Brine*.

Rony Boulos Tayoun (BE '17) is currently pursuing an MS in Management from the European School of Management and Technology in Berlin. He completed an internship with Daimler (Mercedes-Benz) in Stuttgart from April to September 2017.

A Humanitarian and Doctor in the Making

By Naseem Ferdowsi

Ghazi Bou Ghanem
wants to give back

"LAU nourishes our minds and builds our characters, cultivating in us our talents and skills so we give back to our community in an exceptional manner."

First-year medical student Ghazi Bou Ghanem has no doubt that studying medicine will lead him to the life he wants, built around constantly expanding his knowledge and giving back to the community.

"Medicine necessitates a balance between a scientific mind and a humane soul," he explains. "The former can be inspired and challenged to learn, improve and excel in this field of ever-expanding medical knowledge, but the latter will mature with the unique experience of serving humanity for a better world."

While Bou Ghanem has yet to gain all the unique experiences that will allow him to best serve society, he is well on his way to nurturing his scientific mind.

"LAU equips us with the tools to achieve our goals. In five years, I will be doing my residency. In 10 years, I will be practicing my career as a physician, serving humanity and science. Ultimately, my education at LAU will let me fulfill my aspiration as a physician at every level, including being up-to-date with the latest medical research."



One of Bou Ghanem's interests is research on cancer chemoprevention, which he has been pursuing for several years in parallel with a team of student researchers led by Associate Professor of Biology Sandra Rizk. "We are investigating the anti-cancerous effect of nettle plant aqueous extract on colon cancer cell lines, as well as studying the anti-cancerous effect of flax-derived

compounds on leukemia," he explains.

Indeed, the Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine's rigorous and comprehensive program is ensuring that Bou Ghanem will be equipped with what he needs to reach his ambitious goals. However, Bou Ghanem stresses the other important benefits of an LAU education that include all majors and programs.

"LAU nourishes our minds and builds our characters, cultivating in us our talents and skills so we give back to our community in an exceptional manner," says Bou Ghanem, who graduated with a BS in Biology in 2017 with high distinction. Not only was he selected as valedictorian, but he also received the prestigious LAU President's Award for his achievements.

His yearning to gain experience that will help him best serve the community has led him to contribute to various on- and off-campus extracurricular activities. He is an active volunteer with LAU's Medical Student Association, offering his time to three committees, as well as taking a leadership position in several local NGOs, such as the Lebanese State Alumni Community Mount Lebanon II Chapter, where he serves as secretary.

Bou Ghanem's educational success and active community engagement largely stem from LAU's emphasis on shaping inquisitive, civically minded leaders. He considers himself fortunate, but also recognizes the role played by scholarships and financial aid, which allowed him to study at LAU. "Without scholarship aid at LAU, I would have had to seek knowledge at another university."

Bou Ghanem is one of thousands of students who receive merit and/or need-based financial support from LAU. The university strives to ensure that all academically deserving students have a chance to pursue their education within its walls and continues to raise funds for scholarships so that more students like Bou Ghanem can achieve their long-term goals.

A 1.5\$ Million Gift Toward Excellence in Engineering Education

By Naseem Ferdowsi

The Talal and Maha Shair Engineering Floor is a place for teaching, research and collaboration



LAU's School of Engineering is a powerhouse for much of the region's workforce in petroleum, construction, computer and software technology, mechatronics, aerospace, and more. As the school continues to produce top engineers, many experts are taking note and contributing to the endeavor.

Talal Shair is the latest. In fact, the longtime friend and supporter of the university, and Dar Al-Handasah Chairman and CEO, recently made a \$1.5 million donation to the School of Engineering.

"We felt the need to be part of LAU's exciting venture of evolving positively both academically and physically," said Shair.

Specifically, Shair wanted to contribute to the university's new, six-floor Engineering Laboratories and Research Center on the Byblos campus. "LAU embarked on the challenge of building an impressive engineering lab center, and with our eye toward contributing to excellence in engineering education at the university, it made sense for us," said Shair of what inspired his major gift.

In honor of Shair's generous contribution, the sixth floor of the Engineering Laboratories and Research Center will be named after him and his wife. The Talal and Maha Shair Engineering Floor features academic labs, dean's offices and a beautifully landscaped outdoor space, all currently open to students, faculty and visitors.

Emphasizing the university's appreciation of the Shair family, LAU President Joseph G. Jabbara said, "We have been building new facilities for our students, including a major one on our Byblos campus, and Mr. Talal Shair and Mrs. Maha Shair decided to contribute a

significant gift toward that, and we are so grateful."

With innovation and research at the forefront of LAU's strategic plans, the Engineering Laboratories and Research Center is a dynamic base for teaching and collaborative research, featuring high-end facilities conveniently surrounded by the university's engineering departments. The 10,000-square-meter space boasts an array of specialized workrooms, including a soil geotechnical lab, internal combustion engines lab, and electronic circuits lab, among dozens of others.

"This gift is crucial to our goals at LAU and to a facility that is giving our next generation of youth the opportunity to gain the unique, hands-on experience they need to become entrepreneurs, inventors and innovators," said Nassib N. Nasr, assistant vice president for development at LAU.

The multidisciplinary engineering hub also promotes collaboration between students through its unique design of social spaces. The goal is to encourage interactions and generate opportunities to explore new initiatives that will change how the world works.

The Shair family has been a longtime friend and supporter of LAU, with its commitment spanning an incredible 31 years, beginning with the generosity of the late Kamal Shair, co-founder of Dar Al-Handasah.

"There is the philanthropic side to our contribution, which is so important in making an impact both directly to the institution and its ability to fund research and scholarships," said Shair. "And hopefully it will inspire others to follow suit," he added.



"We felt the need to be part of LAU's exciting venture of evolving positively both academically and physically."

WHY I GIVE BACK

Maguy Zakhem (BA '75)



Alumna Maguy Zakhem, along with her husband Abdallah and the Zakhem family, could be called the foundation of LAU's Byblos campus. This is because it was their land – gifted to LAU in the 1990s and worth nearly \$1 million at the time – upon which the university expanded into a two-campus institution. Today, the Byblos campus is a thriving hub for LAU students and bears the Zakhem name in various places – including the seven-story Zakhem Hall – to celebrate the family's many major gifts and ongoing generosity to the university.

The Zakhems explain *why they give back*.

Why do you both give back to LAU?

First and foremost, LAU (formerly Beirut University College, BUC) is the alma mater of Maguy, who is president of the Alumni of Class of '75. Secondly, because we in the Zakhem family were raised to understand that education is primary in life, success and in promoting future generations to build solid foundations.

How did the institution shape Mrs. Zakhem? What traits and qualities did she gain from her time at BUC?

BUC taught Maguy a sense of leadership, responsibility, autonomy and freedom of spirit.

What message would you like to convey to LAU alumni and current students? What words of wisdom could you impart?

We encourage fellow alumni and current students to persevere in their studies, follow their heart and dreams, accomplish their ambitions wholeheartedly, and never give up in their pursuit of success and achievement.

What would you both like to see LAU achieve in the near future?

We would like to see LAU able to provide education to a wider audience of students from various diverse backgrounds and bigger campuses that house several successful schools, which have tremendous offerings in a multitude of educational fields, disciplines and fields for the future generations to prosper intellectually and practically.

Why are you both interested in supporting education, especially in Lebanon?

We are both interested in supporting education because education is an expression and a source of self-worth, enlightenment, vision, freedom of spirit, and, most importantly, individuality of being.

CREATING A LASTING LEGACY



✧ COLONEL DON MAFRIGE ✧

Second-generation Lebanese-American Don Mafrige has been a consistent donor to LAU since 1985.

The native Texan attended the University of Texas before joining the US Army Reserves where, during 30 years in the service, he rose to the rank of colonel.

By the time he retired in 1989, he was highly regarded in the army, having been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, a prestigious award presented to those who distinguish themselves with outstanding achievement or service to the United States.

Mafrige is married to his high-school sweetheart Nancy, with whom he has four children and now six grandchildren. He is also the owner of Mafrige Real Estate in Galveston and Houston, TX, which specializes in commercial properties. In 1996, he expanded into politics, winning a seat on the Galveston City Council.

Mafrige is active within the Lebanese community in Texas and strongly believes in giving back by supporting Lebanese educational funds. In 2016, he set up the Don and Nancy Mafrige Scholarship Endowment, which offers financial aid to worthy LAU students.

Of his continuous support, he says: "I had the opportunity to visit the LAU campus in Beirut while I was in Lebanon, and I was impressed by the diversity of the university and the student makeup. It looked like a peaceful representation of what Lebanon should look like. Therefore, for me, it was important to contribute financially toward the education of the Lebanese youth because a strong student body will be the future leaders and decision-makers, and it's important to make sure they are as diverse and equipped to build as peaceful and thriving society as possible."



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