UPP to Support 50 USP Award Winners throughout their AUB Education

The University Scholarship Program (USP), with the assistance of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has made the dream of attending AUB a reality for 50 public school students who come from various parts of Lebanon.

On the morning of September 5, 2012, these 50 young scholars took their first steps towards a better chance at life. Dubbed the “Ambassador Merit Scholars” by the program, they filed into West Hall to attend an orientation that better introduced them to AUB environment and expectations. Provost Ahmad Dallal and USAID Mission Director to Lebanon, Azza Al Abd, also made an appearance and extended words of welcome and congratulations to the students.

All students receiving this award from the USP will have their tuition, dorm and book fees waived for the entire period of their chosen field of study. Students will also receive a stipend and laptops. The aim of the program is to provide these underprivileged, yet deserving individuals who come from public schools across Lebanon, with a shot at a high quality university education.

To cope with AUB’s prevalent use of the English language in instruction, and in everyday interaction, students will complete one or two semesters of intensive English language training, depending on their needs. The University Preparatory Program (UPP) will cater to this as well as prep the students to enter their desired fields of study.

UPP director, Dr. Samar Harkouss, will also oversee the students’ progress until they complete all their years at AUB and act as advisor and mentor beyond matters of academia.

During orientation students met with UPP instructors, and UPP Director and Academic Monitor, Dr. Harkouss invited the students to seek advice and support whenever they needed it. Associate Dean and UPP Director, Dr. Malek Tabbal, encouraged students to participate in AUB life beyond academics. “You have to be involved in the university and university life,” he said during his address to the students.

Tabbal introduced AUB as a chance for a well-rounded education, in which students tap into subjects beyond their major or chosen program, and develop analytical and critical thinking skills. Tabbal also stressed student responsibility and autonomy. Students were also taken through their USP contracts by USP coordinator, Ms. Rola Mekkawi, and conditions and expectations were explained before the students could sign them.

Because students participating in this program are expected to give back to their local communities and become leaders in their fields, they are to complete civic engagement and leadership training requirements. Students will continuously work on short and long term community projects to breed in them a sense of civic commitment to the regions they come from and the country at large.

Students’ First Reactions at AUB Orientation

The students also got a chance to mingle and get acquainted. Jessica Hanna from Torza – Bcharreh is the first of her family to attend AUB. She said her older siblings attended the Lebanese University. Hanna is still debating whether she completes a Medical Lab or Mechanical Engineering degree. She likes to hike and wants to help teach children.

Issa Haddar lives in Beirut. His father is a butcher and works various odd jobs when he can find them. Haddar himself works at a local Hardees to support his family and is looking forward to AUB. “They gave us a lot of information, it’s overwhelming, but I am excited to be here,” he said. Haddar plans to study Computer Science and wants to play tennis on campus and join the Red Cross.

Layla Chreim and Fatima Al Sakka both want to pursue a master’s degree after they complete their programs. Chreim is looking at English and education and Al Sakka wants to consider construction engineering. They
like that AUB campus is so big but still feel lost on the
premises. "The campus is very big and I had a lot of trouble
finding the room today, but they told me give it two weeks
and you will get used to the area," said Chreim.

The Ambassador Merit Scholars entering AUB this
September will develop the potential to inspire real change
in their communities. UPP and their study at AUB will give
them the guidance and tools to lead prosperous lives and
pass on the torch of knowledge to posterity.

Students Get Introduced to Jafet
Library and the Writing Center

Reading and writing instructors introduced UPP and USP
students to academic services on AUB campus. To get more
familiar with AUB facilities, UPP and USP students were
given guided tours of Jafet Library and the Writing Center in
an attempt to get them to make the most of free services
they might not have considered before.

At Jafet library, students were made aware of the
magnitude of resources available to them – many later
expressed surprise at how much was at their fingertips.
Students visited the microfilm room where newspapers are
archived and DVDs are kept. They were given a quick session
in the library’s e-classroom on how to look for resources
within the library. Students also checked out the archives
room and looked at rare manuscripts kept in the library.

At the writing center, students were assured support for
their writing assignments and advised to consult the center
whenever they had any concerns with their coursework.
Trained staff was ready to help edit and offer advice to all in
need.

After the visits, students were asked to complete an
assignment for their reading and writing classes in which
they would need to consult the academic facilities they had
visited.

UPP Team Has Lunch Outing in City Café,
Downtown

A delicious lunch was held for the UPP team and students
on December 14, 2012 in the downtown area. Students from
all four sections of UPP and USP joined their instructors for
lunch and conversation at the City café.

Also dropping in was Dean of the Faculty of Arts and
Sciences, Dr. Patrick McGreevy. Dr. McGreevy joined the
UPP team and made several stops at students’ tables to
break the ice and engage them in conversation.

It was a chance for everyone to unwind and socialize
in an atmosphere far away from academia. After lunch,
everyone was free to roam the downtown area stores
and outlets. Many were attracted to the nearby Antoine
bookstore and spent considerable time sampling books.
Others took the opportunity to do some Christmas shopping.

A Student Reflection on the City Café
Lunch, by Mohamed Ghotme

One of the most fascinating places that I have visited during
this semester was Down Town Beirut. This trip was planned
by our UPP coordinator. It was the first time that I heard of
Down Town Beirut, and this gave me the motivation to visit
it. Some of my friends briefly described it to me while we
were on the bus on our way there.

When we arrived, everything was completely different.
I didn’t imagine that it would be as beautiful as it appeared
in reality. The souk consists of several different shops. In my
opinion, it is a golden kingdom, especially since the yellow
color was dominant and casted on the buildings.

Two friends and I started wandering in the souk to
discover the shops. There were many different shops and
every one has its own design and attracts the customers.
You can find anything that you like in these shops. There are
shops that sell clothes, jewelry, watches, books, and there are
many restaurants and cafes. While we were walking around,
we saw different brand names like Swatch, Boss, Orange,
DKNY, H&M, Puma etc.
Our visit was during the preparation for the Christmas season, so the place was decorated and the roads were clean. One of the places that we visited was City Café. At this restaurant, we sat with our instructors and ate lunch. We sat for a long time telling jokes, talking, and taking photos. There was a famous basketball player with whom we took a picture.

Down Town Beirut is a different world compared to my village. In Down Town Beirut, everything is available. In my village however, most of the necessities will not be found, and you have to go to the other villages to buy them. In summary, this trip was one of the most fascinating trips that I have ever participated in.

**UPP Faculty and Students Celebrate with a Christmas Party**

To celebrate the end of their first semester at AUB, students joined their instructors for a Christmas party. The party took place on December 21, 2012 -- the last day of instruction for the fall semester.

Students and instructors contributed delicious holiday goods to the occasion, and UPP students brought in both a chocolate and vanilla flavored bouche de Noel. After the food and drinks were gone, the dancing began.

The music was a mix of popular Arabic and English tunes. Anything from traditional Baalbek dabke to the viral gangnam style dance was performed by the students. The party heated up as students competed to showcase their best dancing skills to a cheering crowd of UPP faculty and classmates.

The party ended with an eruption of cheering and applause as best wishes were exchanged for the holidays and the New Year. Everyone parted in good spirits and the promise of reunion in the spring semester.
Christmas in Times of War, by Lean Tayarah and Fareed Arnouk

On the night of the 24th of December 2010, the city of Tartous was celebrating Christmas. Everybody was watching the annual Christmas carnival that we usually do in our city. The smile was drawn on everyone’s face, but no one imagined, at the time, that this will be the last carnival we celebrate. The next two years passed with no Christmas time. Joy, happiness and smiles -- all of them have abandoned our life. Everybody is missing the carnival. Furthermore, Christmas day became a normal boring day that passes in our life without being noticed. Even more so, this day became a source of our sadness because we remember the old pretty days that we miss a lot.

We used to receive calls from our relatives at Christmas wishing us happy days, but now some of them don’t call at all. Others call to say “hope this day will bring joy and peace for this country.” And another few can’t even call since they left this planet to live next to God. Nobody knows how to be happy; everyone has his own reasons to be sad. Each family has lost one of its members. Even if someone didn’t lose one of his siblings, he can’t feel happy because one of his neighbors lost his son yesterday. Throughout these 2 years, “Merry Christmas” became an expression which lost its effect on our hearts and souls. In addition, it became a silly word, dry out of emotions.

Even the Christmas tree has disappeared from our houses. Santa has lost his way to Syria. Children were prevented the presents they were used to waiting for every year. Christmas became a day for God to help those who have lost their home, who have lost one of their family members, or even who have lost everything in their life.

Now after two disappointing years, every Christmas, the Syrians gather to pray for the future of Syria. All of them wish that Syria overcomes its crisis next year. Every one of us misses the old days when Damascus was colored with bells during Christmas. All we hope for is to return to the peace and joy we used to know.
Student Resolutions for 2013

“I wish that 2013 will be a lucky and happy year for me and all people.”
Samer Khoury

“Even though I hate the number 13 I will get rid of this superstition. I will make my slogan ‘nothing is impossible.’
Reem Kawtharany

“I hope I become a powerful man in society, a gentleman, more educated, and captivate all the girls.”
Ghabi Al-Tabsh

“I hope to be healthy, and help my parents in everything they need.”
Mohamad Ghotme

“I want to work hard to improve my second language, the English language. Also, I hope to interact much better with my university when I begin to do my major.”
Abbas

“I want to learn how to drive a car and have one.”
Ola Halawi

“I’m going to take courses which are related to medicine. You, 2013, will be different for me because I’ve become more serious.”
Zahraa Saleh

“I will confess to my closest friend that I love her and I want to begin a relationship with her.”
Rachid Klaimi

“I want to buy a big motorcycle. Probably, I will travel to Iraq.”
Hassan Khalil

“I would become more powerful than before.”
Duua Charaf

“I want to be more successful than before. I think I am going to lose some weight.”
Youssef Bandak

“When I become a student in the faculty of engineering at AUB, I would be the first in my class.”
Hasan Hmedi

“I’d like to end the year with a more sculpted body.”
Rami Abou Naccoul

“I will try to spend more time with my family and friends.”
Samar Ghadban

AUB...A Wonderful Place!
by Mahmoud Hallak

What a wonderful university! AUB is the most amazing place that I have ever seen... It makes me comfortable somehow. AUB has so many different places that have their own environment and mood.

However, there is something strange at the university such as, the smoking areas. AUB rules say that whenever a person wants to smoke, he or she has to move into the smoking area. In my opinion, whether the student smokes in the smoking area or not, the smell still spreads around the campus because, there is more than one smoking area around the campus. Perhaps, it helps somehow, but not that much. Nevertheless, the most interesting place at AUB is the lower campus. You can watch the sea, huge green field, lots of trees with different colors and so on... All of these make me calm and patient, it also allows me to think positively. Also, when I get angry, I go there and listen to some music.

There are a lot of cats around the campus, and all of them are nice and you can consider them as a friend... however, there are also rules for the cats. For instance, if a student hits a cat with something that could harm it, the student will take a warning and if he or she repeats that, he or she will be in serious trouble. Cats have rights.

I indeed recommend to all Lebanese students who are living abroad, to come to AUB or at least visit AUB, because it is a really amazing, beautiful campus and has a nice environment. Even its education, AUB has the ability to prepare the student to gain good information with a lot of knowledge, which can help the student to get a good position in his or her career. Never forget that AUB is an extremely well-known university in the Middle East!
**STUDENT POEMS**

**By Hasan Hmedi**

She has blue eyes  
They look like skies  
And when she dresses in green  
My heart becomes a trampoline  
She is my entire world  
And to describe her I can't find a word  
And when she wakes me up soon  
I'll think it was the moon

Beside the blue sea  
Birds are free  
Under the clear sky  
The devil will die  
Among the white cedars  
Lebanon is leader of leaders

**By Ola Halawi**

Face it, if you don’t you’ll drown  
And the more you give up, the more you drown  
Out from the frying pan, into the fire  
The one who says you can’t is a liar  
Don’t get upset from the first try  
Birds fall down before they fly  
Remember when you get depressed  
To rise up, try your best  
It’s a chain, don’t put it on fire  
Without pain, you don’t get higher  
But how am I supposed to endure such excruciation  
I would do it, if, up to me, were its cessation  
Grief! Isn’t there, in the world, someone else?  
If you know what I am feeling  
You’ll understand how much I am hapless…  
Know what grief? Get off my back

**By Rami Abou Naccoul**

Live your life no matter what people say  
You only live once, so take that shot, benefit from every single day  
Forget about the past because it will never last  
Think about the future, think about today  
Make your dreams come true, forget about other things,  
This is what you should do  
Life is short, I’m telling you  
No one has a fort to protect them from passing away  
Live your life no matter what people say

**By Samar Ghadban**

Winter, you will die  
Although your clouds hide the sky  
And your dusky darkness spreads over the gloomy fields  
Destroying the buds  
But, you will fail, you can’t resist our faith,  
And that is the truth  
Spring will come, and spread spirit in the space  
To cleanse your sulky face  
Our hopes never die  
But, you will die

**By Mohamed Ghotme**

Students in the audiovisual room at Jafet Librar
STUDENT PROFILES

Getting Involved at AUB Beyond the Classroom: Adriano Murtada

Adriano Murtada is curious about a lot of things. Whether he is basking in AUB’s reliable internet to watch educational YouTube videos, or reading books on politics, he’s always looking to learn something new. He has also undertaken activities outside his course schedule at UPP.

During his first semester at AUB, Murtada, like several other UPP students, took the initiative to get involved in clubs around campus. He opted for the Model United Nations (MUN) club, which he had also been involved in at high school. “It teaches you to be diplomatic and make negotiations with other people,” said Murtada of why he joined. Murtada also feels that negotiation skills are something the Arab world desperately needs.

Another benefit of this activity is developing speech skills. Murtada said the club offers a frequent venue for speech making – which has helped him improve his speaking skills. “We learn how to act in tough situations,” said Murtada and described his last crises conference – where the US faced China (he was China) – as an example of this. Murtada is considering joining the debate club and toastmasters to further improve his speaking skills.

Being half-Brazilian, Murtada is also interested in starting his own Brazilian Cultural Club. “We would have a carnival event that would take over AUB and Beirut,” said Murtada. “It would be the biggest party at AUB,” he added. Murtada offered samba lessons, sampling Brazilian food and drinks, and a celebration of Brazilian Independence Day as other possible events the club would host.

Achieving New Heights: Fatima Al Sakka

She hails from a small village in the south. Fatima Al Sakka is one of the 50 Merit scholars who joined UPP with a four-year scholarship to pursue a degree of her choice. A semester later, and she’s already tackling her chosen field of construction engineering. This past fall, Al Sakka excelled at her UPP studies and made the leap to sophomore after only one semester.

Fatima Al Sakka is keen on enhancing the not-so-posh areas in Beirut and Lebanon. Her own little village of Sultaniyeh comes to mind. Al Sakka described it as an abandoned village because everyone is abroad. She said that it has no schools or hospitals. She has big dreams for improvement and renovation. “I want to improve the Ouzai area, and I want to build a public library in my village,” she said. She feels that the library would give students an ideal place to study.

Al Sakka said that she used to study an average of four hours a day in school, but that UPP was easier. She especially appreciated the UPP math and science courses because they have provided a very strong background – which is making her sophomore courses a lot easier for her.

Red Cross is one club Al Sakka wants to join at AUB. “I love helping others,” she said when asked why. Al Sakka even completed some first aid training in a neighboring village before she moved to Beirut for studies at AUB. Her hobbies include shopping, running, soccer and basketball.