Inauguration of the Baha and Walid Bassatne Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering

May 25, 2016
Remarks by Dean Makram Suidan

Chemical and Petroleum Engineering are two of the most important disciplines in Engineering. Chemical Engineering is the engine that facilitates industrialization while you all know the importance of oil and gas for the economies of the Arab World and hopefully, one day soon, the economy of Lebanon. Because of this I want to thank the Bassatne family from the bottom of my heart for this very generous gift of naming the **Baha and Walid Bassatne Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering**. This Department was established in September 2015 and is the last department to be established at AUB. More importantly, it is the first and only Department to be named at AUB, which says that we are doing something right in the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture. I also would like to thank Dr. Samir Traboulsi for his pivotal role in this naming.

Let me take a few moments and explain the significance and impact of this naming. This generous gift will become an endowment the proceeds of which will go towards funding research in the areas of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering. Somebody may ask why research. Research is what distinguishes AUB in general, and its most important Faculty, FEA from other universities in the country. Our faculty members teach only two courses a semester while faculty members at other Lebanese Universities teach upwards of three courses per semester and some teach as many as five courses. Our laboratory courses are taught in state-of-the-art facilities by full-time skilled engineers. This relieves our professors from the heavy chores of such courses. All this is designed to afford our professors time to think and perform transformative research that keeps them current in very fast-evolving fields. The beneficiaries of all this are our students who end up receiving an education that is second to none.

When Adib Bassatne and Samir Traboulsi, graduated from FEA in 1973 we had four departments and a total of 300 students. Now FEA boasts six Departments and one graduate program. 2,380 undergraduate students, 240 MS students and upwards of 70 doctoral students are enrolled in FEA. Over 30% of the students that graduate from FEA end up going for post-graduate studies mostly in the U.S. Our students are sought after overseas and they bring honor and recognition to this great institution.
I would like to mention that FEA has five other departments, Architecture and Design, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Industrial Engineering and Management, and Mechanical Engineering. It also has one graduate program in Biomedical Engineering. All these programs as well as the Faculty itself are yet to be named. There are still many opportunities to help this great Faculty.

While visiting Mr. Adib Bassatne in his office, I tried to push for this naming to occur while I was still Dean of this Faculty. I am grateful to him that this did happen. I am very glad to be leaving on such a high note. Thank you again to the Bassatne family for this wonderful gift and thank you all for joining us on this great occasion.