



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUB celebrates remarkable success of the MEPI-TLS Gender Scholars Program and the graduation of 34 scholars

The American University of Beirut (AUB) commemorated the achievements of the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Tomorrow's Leaders Gender Scholars Program (TLS) and the graduation of 34 gender scholars in the program's third closing ceremony. The event welcomed distinguished representatives, including the U.S. Embassy Beirut's Political and Economic Counselor Amy Smith and MEPI Program Grants Manager Maya Barhouche. Notable attendees from the AUB community included Provost Zaher Dawy, Deputy Provost Lina Choueiri, Associate Provost Jocelyn DeJong, and Vice Provost and Registrar Bradley Jon Tucker. The ceremony brought together faculty, staff, the graduating gender scholars, and their MEPI team members.

MEPI-TLS is a unique U.S.-sponsored initiative which aims to enhance students' awareness of gender inequality and equip them with tools to enact change. MEPI-TLS students joined the university's community of gender scholars across various faculties and programs. By the end of the program, these scholars will write and publish two papers, attend gender-focused courses, participate in workshops, and accomplish gender-related activities.

Provost Dawy opened the celebration noting, "with each passing cohort, we witness visible transformations among our scholars, who are being provided with invaluable exposure through outreach efforts, diverse experiences, and a profound understanding of the importance of applying a gender lens to every

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aspect of their lives.” Dawy highlighted that the MEPI-TLS program has facilitated critical understanding of the challenges facing the region and the world and has allowed the AUB and MEPI scholars to become part of a community which continues to “lead in research, producing knowledge and impacting policies and practices, around gender and feminism.”

Amy Smith extended her heartfelt congratulations to the graduating cohort. She urged them to utilize their knowledge and skills to challenge stereotypes, advocate for gender equality, and create opportunities for women and girls to thrive. She emphasized the U.S. government’s commitment to addressing gender inequality and to investing in MEPI-TLS’ undergraduate and graduate scholarships, with the aim of fostering equitable leadership in the Middle East and worldwide. “When all voices are heard and all perspectives are considered, we are better able to solve problems, innovate, and create positive change,” she reiterated, and thus reinforcing the program’s mission and its students.

The scholars then took the stage to showcase their exceptional work through video presentations. AUB MEPI-TLS gender scholars played an integral role in this year’s closing ceremony. Scholar Sacha Saad eloquently introduced MEPI-TLS and its team members. She thanked Dr. Pierre Karam, Dr. Tania Haddad, Dr. Vivienne Badaan, Lina Bou Habib and Maya Adra for their dedication.

Scholar Lama Younes highlighted the significance of gender-focused classes and workshops in providing a safe space to address deeply rooted biases and combat them through activism and knowledge. Scholar Reem Wehbe elaborated on the cohort’s year-long activism, including collaborations with NGOs and institutions such as the Asfari Institute, Title IX, Marsa, and Helem. She also spoke about the scholars’ personal initiatives in combating sexism, gender-based violence, and climate injustice. Scholar Victor Ghazi discussed the white paper requirement, which provided students with a platform to express their voices beyond the classroom.

Medical student and 2020 MEPI-TLS cohort alumna Mohamad Wehbe then shared the unique role of Mouzakara Jandariya, a student-led publication focused on enhancing gender literacy, on and off-campus. He captivated the audience with the publication’s growth and impact.

2021 MEPI-TLS alumna Nahida Shehab, who is embarking on a career at the World Bank in Washington, delivered the event's closing remarks. She eloquently highlighted how MEPI-TLS served as a catalyst for her personal and professional growth, and how the program not only instilled a sense of empowerment but also equipped her with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in the industry, particularly in core gender concepts related to sustainable development.

The event culminated with a video collage showcasing the achievements and future careers of numerous MEPI-TLS scholars, who have become active and influential members of their communities. After a group photo session with students and guests, the celebration continued with a reception where attendees acknowledged that this year's cohort is prepared to face an unjust world with resilience and determination.

ENDS

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 800 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 365-bed hospital.

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