

For Immediate Release



## Dorman to the graduating class of 2011: 'You will have a voice in shaping tomorrow's societies'

Beirut, Lebanon- 27/06/2011 - About 1885 students graduated from the American University of Beirut this year, with nearly 1700 attending the 142<sup>nd</sup> commencement exercises that took place on June 25, 2011 and which, for the first time, encompassed the honorary doctorates ceremony in which five influential figures were honored for their positive impact on the region and the world.

After a processional and the conferring of doctoral degrees, AUB President Peter Dorman gave the keynote speech, addressing students, parents and faculty.

"We know that many of you may well have a voice, if not a direct role, in shaping the societies of tomorrow that will emerge from the troubles of today. So, whether or not you wish to accept that additional burden, our collective hopes are riding on you.

I trust—I believe—that your education has equipped you in some measure for that role,"

Dorman told the graduates during the ceremony that was held on the Green Field.

"AUB is a place where academic freedom has been fiercely argued and fiercely protected, in past years and in past days. Indeed, freedom of expression is more than an abstraction or a right: in an academic setting it is an obligation that defines much of what this university proudly stands for."

Paying tribute to the faculty members as well, Dorman said that the University "is fortunate to have an accomplished and dedicated faculty, who have served as your mentors for these past years, and it is my experience that they are rarely reluctant to speak their minds. I thank them for that; I honor them for that: academic freedom is a defining principle for this great institution."

Dorman then highlighted the uprisings the region is going through, but reminded students that change does not happen overnight and the importance of open discourse and critical thinking becomes higher during times of turmoil.

"At these moments it is ever more urgent for institutions of learning, and especially the American University of Beirut, not to provide answers, but to provide the freedom and the intellectual space for young generations to imagine the unthinkable and debate the undebatable," said Dorman, before adding that he feels that AUB has changed him just as it has influenced the young graduates. "I am grateful for the bountiful enrichment this university bestows upon those it touches. Tonight we are all classmates together," he said. Business student Ali Sheet, the outgoing vice-president for the University Student-Faculty Committee (USFC), gave the speech on behalf of his graduating class.

"It is our responsibility to carry [AUB's] legacy on, and apply it in our offices and our homes," said Sheet. "However, there is another virtue that we acquired throughout our AUB experiences: tolerance. When you walk around the university campus, you are surrounded by students from all of the eighteen sects present in Lebanon. As a melting pot of different backgrounds, AUB has endured it all, and embraced us without discrimination."

Addressing students, after paying tribute to faculty members, Sheet said: "It is time for you to give back; give back to your family, your university, your society. Let nothing stand in your way, and remember that the education you have gained today empowers you to do anything you want."

The ceremony included songs by the AUB choir as well as a special colorful musical performance.

The names of students who were granted the Penrose Award were also announced.

The Penrose Award is given to an outstanding student of the senior class in each of the five faculties. Awardees should excel in scholarship, character, leadership and contribution to University life.

The awardees for this year were: Nadim Mustapha Haidar and Reem Hussein Harb from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences; Nour Ahmad Safa from the Olayan School of Business; Salwa Mohamed Yassine Sabbagh from the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences; Catherine Abi Abdallah from the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture; Sylvana Hassanieh from the Faculty of Health Sciences; Rima Radi Kaddoura from the School of Nursing; and Sarah Mohammed Karram from the Faculty of Medicine.

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 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the 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 420-bed hospital.

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