

For Immediate Release



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AUB holds commencement ceremonies for graduates in the Faculties of nursing, medicine, and health sciences where all safety regulations were applied

Over three days, June 3, 4 and 5, 2021, the American University of Beirut (AUB) held commencement exercises for the Rafic Hariri School of Nursing (HSON), Faculty of Medicine (FM), and the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS). Under the continuing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and having received their vaccinations, 247 graduates in medical and health disciplines marked the first part of AUB's 152nd Commencement Exercises.

The events took place on the Green Oval, applying all safety and precautionary regulations. The ceremonies were livestreamed for family and friends on YouTube and Facebook and opened with an address by AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri.

President Khuri spoke in his speech about “the great healers, scholars, scientists, writers, artists, epistemologists, philosophers, engineers, and musicians who are just off-center in the stories of legends, but whose real words and deeds make an everyday difference, more often than not for the better.” He named inventors, campaigners, and researchers who have contributed to saving and protecting lives in the face of the pandemic and Lebanon's challenging circumstances.

“Reflect carefully on what you can do to bring good news to the world,” added Khuri. “By insisting on shaping and serving a better, fairer, more inclusive, and more hopeful world, you can answer the question of where the good news has gone because you, my AUB class of 2021, you are our good news...and the good news of a better world.”

“We took this crisis as an opportunity and challenge to continue building our profession to save our people,” Dr. Laila Farhood, interim dean of HSON, told the nursing graduates on June 3, 2021. “You are entrusted in fostering a culture of resilience. You have chosen a noble profession and you are well prepared to start your professional journey: you aimed high, worked hard and earned it.” The student speech was delivered by nursing undergraduate and recipient of the Ann Smith award, Grace Hajinazarian.

A distribution of HSON awards followed, in recognition of academic achievements; professional integrity and seriousness of purpose; and contribution to professional and university life: Roba El Zibaoui and Raneem Mohamad (Janet Haddadin award – for highest cumulative GPA); Remy El Mdawar (Mary Crawford Nightingale award); Grace Hajinazarian (Ann Smith award); Nour Fakhran (Nada Alameddine Kanso award); Wael Patrick Karaki (Emily Asfour award); Tala Khattab (Agnes Shamaa award); Zahraa Tarhini (Helen Zarwi award); Lama Amine (Najla Marston award); Dima Abdul Ghani (Jacqueline Rubeiz award); Hanine Yassine (Hanneh Shahine award); Mohamad Sweidan (Leila Iliya award). The Penrose award was presented to Raneem Mohamad. A total of 51 HSON students graduated, 50 undergraduates and one graduate.

On June 4, 2021, a total of 106 FM students graduated: 11 graduates and 95 MDs. Student speeches were delivered by Mohamed Hussein Noureldein, doctoral graduate in biomedical sciences at AUB's FM, and recipient of the Penrose award Ralph Issam Zeitoun, who represented MD graduates. Keynote speaker of this event was AUB alumnus Dr. Dimitri Azar, president and CEO of Twenty/Twenty Therapeutics, internationally recognized ophthalmic surgeon, distinguished university professor, and prolific leader in vision research and innovation. "Our local experience with COVID-19 was horrifying but here again the history will register the solid bravery of dedicated women and men, like you, as heroes of the day who stood up to the disaster, upheld the Hippocratic Oath and did not abandon the pandemic scene out of fear," said Interim Dean of Medicine Ghazi Zaatari in his address to the graduates. "Going through the experience of the past 15 months makes you a unique group of graduates that will carry this special experience for the rest of your lives."

The third commencement ceremony was for FHS, where 90 students received their degrees on June 5, 2021: 57 undergraduates and 33 graduates. "You are graduating at a time in history when Lebanon and the world desperately need the workforce skilled in public health and health sciences," said FHS Interim Dean Abla Sibai. "Now go out, you are needed today like no other time in history, make the right choice, multiply what you do by working in teams and for a purpose greater than yourselves."

The speech was followed by the distribution of FHS awards to distinguished undergraduates for their academic excellence and commitment to the community: Dima Balaa who received the Kiram Sanioura Memorial Prize in Environmental Health; Sara Amro who received the Abdelbasset Ahmad Sanioura Memorial Prize in Health Professions; and Ayman Al Shoukari who received the Penrose award and presented a speech.

Three graduate awards were also presented at the FHS ceremony in recognition of excellence in and commitment to public health. The Dr. Nadim Adib Haddad MPH Academic Achievement award was presented to Loyal Ghamlouche and Jida Al-Mulki; the Graduate Academic

Achievement Award for the Master of Science programs was presented to Elizabeth Mukonyo; and The Dr. Musa Najib Nimah Endowed Award for Public Health Leadership was presented to Khawla Nasser Aldeen who was student speaker at the ceremony.

In-person commencement exercises for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, and the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business are planned for September 3-4, 2021, upon completion of AUB's comprehensive vaccination program. Arrangements are also in process to graduate in October 2021 the AUB Class of 2020 whose commencement exercises had to be put on hold last year.

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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 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 140 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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