

For Immediate Release



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## **AUB Former President John Waterbury honored with Randa Bdeir Leadership Award for supporting the careers of women**

The American University of Beirut (AUB) celebrated the inaugural presentation of the Randa Bdeir Leadership Award in Recognition of Outstanding Leadership in Supporting the Careers of Women. This year, the award honored Dr. John Waterbury for his support of the leadership of women at AUB during more than a decade's career as president of the university.

“Today we are shining a spotlight on the person, whether man or woman, who went against the current and behind the scenes and has cleared the path for women to achieve,” said AUB alumna and donor Randa of the annual award, established on International Women's Day in 2017. “Because I never forget the support I received to get where I am, I have placed a goal for myself to help and support other women around me. Let us support the women around us—the heroes with intelligence, ambition, and talent—and let's transform the face of our society for the better.”

Bdeir added: “A woman never lacks will, perseverance, hard work or intelligence to reach the highest positions in any industry. However what she often misses are the professional opportunities and support to take it all the way.”

This year's awardee and former AUB president, Dr. John Waterbury, is a political economy scholar specialized in developing countries, with a special focus on the Middle East. During his career, he held academic appointments at the University of Michigan and the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University, where he spent 20 years before joining AUB as its 14th president in 1998. He has received many distinctions in recognition of his scholarship and contributions, including honorary degrees from the American University in Cairo, Princeton, and AUB.

At AUB, Waterbury introduced many initiatives such as the President's Service Excellence Award (in 2000) and the Teaching Excellence Award (in 2002). During his tenure as president, in 2003, the university also restarted its honorary degree awarding and reintroduced PhD programs in 2007.

“One of [Waterbury’s] consistently high priorities was to increase the number of women in our faculty ranks and to enhance their leadership in senior administration. He appointed the first ever dean in an academic school, Dr. Huda Zurayk, and the second dean, Dr. Nahla Hwalla,” said AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri upon presenting the award. “He makes you feel engaged, involved, and respected, and that is how every person, every woman and man, who worked with him at AUB describes him. It is one of our greatest priorities as an administration, to continue to build on the important and durable work that John did during his decade-plus as president, and a major focus of that has been to make sure that the lives and careers of women remain an important focus of the university.

“It is a special pleasure, not just for me personally but also for the university, to recognize someone who gives heart and soul to this institution. He went out of his way to develop, nurture, groom, and champion women and men, and he made a difference.”

Waterbury spoke about the extraordinary women he encountered in the student body, faculty, and administration at AUB, and shared stories of milestones he witnessed such as the appointment of the first woman dean at AUB.

“My philosophy on the promotion of women is to not get in the way. They can take care of the rest. Stand aside, make sure there are not artificial obstacles—none based on sexism or misogyny—that women get a fair chance and compete equally, and I’m sure they will excel.

“One of my hopes is that the most senior posts in leadership would be occupied by women in the not too distant future, and above all that, that no one would notice it – that it would just seem normal...I have said it before, ‘Behind every woman, there is nothing but her own courage and perseverance,’ and I believe that still.”

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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 9,100 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 420-bed hospital.

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