

For Immediate Release



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16th FEA Student and Alumni Conference at AUB fosters cross-disciplinary dialogue

Students, faculty, and alumni of the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture at the American University of Beirut (AUB) gathered for the 16th FEA Student and Alumni Conference, with a focus on sharing knowledge across disciplines and across generations.

This annual conference is aimed at bringing current students together with alumni and faculty to present their research and share their expertise and experience. In a departure from previous years where panels were set according to departmental disciplines, this year's conference was designed to break down those boundaries.

“We wanted to have a forum that helps us learn from each other,” explained Dr. Matthias Liermann, chair of the organizing committee and associate professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

The conference was arranged around four cross-cutting themes: design and conceptualization; system and data analysis; safety and the environment; and engineering for life's sake.

Students, alumni, and faculty from a variety of disciplines were grouped in each session according to its set theme. Electrical and computer engineers were together with architects and designers as well as chemical engineers and mechanical engineers, to name a few. Given this multi-disciplinary setup, presenters were challenged by the organizing committee to prepare talks that are accessible to a diverse audience and were given pointers on how to do this in a special workshop before the conference.

Committed to making a better world

AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri spoke in the opening session about the importance of FEA and its commitment to the service of humanity through education and research.

“We are gathered in celebration today of what this faculty does so persistently and with such enduring regularity, and that is the application and advancement of knowledge, scholarship, and expertise, in a range of engineering, architectural, and design fields that truly change things for the better; not just the faces of our societies and communities, but the very health of these societies and the practicality of our lived-in environment,” said President Khuri.

Continuing in this vein, FEA Interim Dean Dr. Alan Shihadeh talked about the new direction of the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture.

“This year the FEA recognized that the status quo is untenable; it made human well-being its central organizing concern and dedicated itself in its new vision statement to helping bring about a viable, livable, and equitable world,” said Dr. Shihadeh. “In our pedagogy and our research, we will be more green, more in sync with the needs of the social majorities, and more wise about the promise and peril of modern technology.”

Students at the center

One major focus of this annual event is allowing students the opportunity to share their research and gain conference experience. The paper submission process was competitive. The conference committee received 94 abstracts and 62 full papers from students. Twenty-four of these were selected for oral presentation and 38 for poster presentation. Students were also involved in all aspects of planning the conference – another learning opportunity for them.

“As a student representative, I would advise students to be more involved in events and conferences that take place at AUB because engaging in this community helps to develop our soft skills that are essential for our work later on,” said Natalie El-Khatib, a student representative from the conference-organizing committee.

Honoring distinguished alumni and faculty

Continuing a tradition from previous years, awards were given at the opening session to four distinguished alumni and five young alumni in recognition of their outstanding achievements and promise. Six distinguished professors were also honored with awards for their impactful research, dedication to students, and valuable service to FEA. (Distinguished Alumni and Faculty awardees).

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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 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 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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