

For Immediate Release



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2,587 undergraduates receive their degrees in AUB's 153rd Commencement Ceremony

Khuri: “You are our good news for the world, our hope for the better days to come”

Over the course of three days, June 9, 10, and 11, the American University of Beirut (AUB) held its 153rd Commencement Ceremony to celebrate the graduation of 2,587 students from the university's seven faculties, and to honor honorary doctorate of humane letters recipients for their leadership and service across various human endeavors.

After awarding doctoral, master's, and medical degrees to the graduate class of 2022 on June 9, and witnessing five world-renowned personalities accept AUB's highest accolade, the honorary doctorate of humane letters, the celebrations continued on June 10, with a ceremony that was held for students receiving their undergraduate degrees from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), Hariri School of Nursing (HSON), Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS), and Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS).

Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB president, addressed the audience of university faculty and staff, graduates, family, and friends. He said, “In the six- and one-half years since I challenged all of us at AUB to become more intellectually accomplished than we are economically elite, we have almost trebled the number of students obtaining an AUB education on full scholarships, with almost a quarter of our community enjoying that privilege this last academic year, the highest number on record for fifty years.”

He added, “Most importantly, you, our students continue to excel, academically and professionally. You have revived student life on campus since your return on October 1st. You receive and grasp opportunities for a better tomorrow. You contest student elections, hold music concerts, win the most competitive prizes in international sports competitions and global Model United Nations contests.”

“You are our good news for the world, our hope for the better days to come,” Khuri said.

The Penrose Award, an honorary annual award given to outstanding AUB graduates from different faculties on the basis of scholarship, character, leadership, and contribution to university life, was offered on June 10 to FAS graduate Amal Ahmad El Masri, HSON graduate Mohamad Ali Atef Jawad, FAFS graduate Karen Beydoun, and FHS graduate Julia Zaydan, who also addressed the audience as the ceremony's student speaker. She said, "As you leave this beautiful place, remember that you, my friends, have the power to transform the world, and I look forward to transforming it with you."

Honorary doctorate recipient Daniel Dennett gave the commencement address for this day of the celebrations. Dennett is a renowned philosopher and educator who has revolutionized thought in neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and artificial intelligence. He spoke about free will as an achievement and about "would-be puppeteers" discovering more and more ways to control others, and how today "the most effective puppet strings ever invented" are mobile phones. He also spoke about his view that "a puppet is free as long as it loves its strings," saying "my message for you all is, love your strings! Protect them from would-be puppeteers, so that you can preserve your autonomy, your free will, instead of becoming the unwitting tool of some other agent. That is the only free will you need."

On June 11, the undergraduate ceremony for the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA) and the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business (OSB) was held. The Penrose Award for these two faculties was offered to MSFEA graduate Georges Haidar and OSB graduate Danielle Salameh.

"As you leave this place where you have struggled, fought, loved, lost and won, know that you are part of something greater than yourselves, something vital that you can help make even greater," said Dr. Fadlo Khuri. "Know that being an alumnus of the American University of Beirut binds you permanently to an institution that stretches from its eternal home in Beirut, to its new campus in Pafos, Cyprus, to all the countries and regions we serve and impact in the Levant, Arabia, Africa, Europe, America and beyond. It binds you to a band of likeminded, determined sisters and brothers, determined to work and sacrifice in the name of excellence, both for its own sake and for the greater good."

MSFEA graduate Elie El Khawand spoke at the event on behalf of the students. He said, "Class of 2022, it feels bittersweet to be heading out into the world beyond these ocean waves crashing against the shore. Our hearts will remain deeply rooted in this vibrant community we call home and to which we owe our success."

The June 11 commencement address was given by honorary doctorate recipient Ouided Bouchamaoui, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate who, as co-collaborator of the Tunisian National

Dialogue Quartet, steered her country, Tunisia, from a socio-political crisis toward a pluralistic democracy in the wake of the 2011 revolution.

“I would like to urge you to adopt an entrepreneur mindset whether you are self-employed or an employee. As you step out with your diploma in hand today, think that in order to make of your lifetime journey a successful one, you should observe these four pillars,” Bouchamaoui said, as she encouraged the graduates in the audience to maintain discipline and autoregulation, stick to the big picture, maintain a high level of commitment, and respect ethics.

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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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