

For Immediate Release



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## **Civic engagement at core of new partnership agreement between AUB and CIH**

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Civic Influence Hub with the aim of bridging the gap between universities and the public sector. As part of AUB's recently launched Strategic Partnership Initiative, the signing ceremony was held on March 24, 2017, in the presence of Minister of State for Administrative Reform and AUB alumna, Dr. Inaya Ezzeddine.

The first phase of the Civic Engagement Program will place recent graduates from Lebanese universities—beginning with AUB and the Lebanese American University—in paid internships at Lebanese government ministries: the Chamber of Commerce and the Ministries of Economy, Finance, and Industry. These interns will be introduced to ongoing projects and initiatives at the ministries and will be part of the teams executing the projects.

Opening the ceremony was Dr. Dima Jamali, Executive Director of AUB's Strategic Partnership Initiative (SPI) as well as Associate Dean and Professor in the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business. She began with a brief description of the SPI, which aims at consolidating and enhancing communication between units within AUB who are involved in community service and civic engagement, as well as building relationships with outside agencies.

“The Strategic Partnership Initiative is about nurturing all kinds of partnerships—with the private sector, with the public sector, and with NGOs—in order to achieve worthwhile outcomes for the students, for the faculty, and for the community,” said Dr. Jamali.

AUB President Fadlo R. Khuri, who established the SPI in September 2016, addressed the audience in Maamari Auditorium comprised of AUB faculty, students, and administration; government officials; NGO representatives; and concerned citizens. He spoke not only about the importance of this MOU but also about other initiatives to come, including with the Minister of State for Administrative Reform.

“That’s what this symposium is all about: to develop an understanding between AUB and the Civic Influence Hub as a stepping stone to further civic engagement by our students. We hope that this will be followed in short order by collaboration with the Minister and engagement by our faculty and our leadership to look at how we can aid the government in technical aspects and in other areas so that we can move together towards a better, more accomplished, more transparent, and more sustainable society,” said President Khuri.

The only female minister in the current cabinet, Dr. Inaya Ezzeddine credited part of her success to the education she received at AUB and noted that their goals at the Ministry should focus on the regaining of public trust.

“Engaging our university students and graduates in public service in Lebanon is one of the necessary tools to improve the public sector since it pumps a needed dose of fresh skills and an energetic pool of talent into the system. This will also contribute to developing a sense of responsible citizenship, belonging, ownership in the process, and civic duty for a just, stable, and democratic society,” concluded Minister Ezzeddine.

“This is indeed a historic moment whereby the CIH meets with AUB – a historic edifice known for its contributions on the national as well as regional levels,” said Eng. Fahd Saccal, President of the Civic Influence Hub, who spoke about the goals and terms of the agreement. “The signing of this MoU is the fruit of our common initiatives and goals to activate the partnership between civil society, the government, and the private sector toward civic engagement and social responsibility.”

In addition, the audience heard from a representative of the UNDP, Mr. Arklan El Seblani, Chief Technical Advisor on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in Arab Countries, who talked about the importance of engaging youth in transforming the public sectors of their countries.

From one of AUB’s sister institutions, Mr. Fouad Maroun, General Secretary of Saint Joseph University (USJ), detailed the various intra-mural and extra-mural civic engagement efforts ongoing at USJ. The program finished up with a short film about the many projects and initiatives of AUB’s Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS) accompanied by remarks from its Director, Mr. Rabih Shibli.

The Q&A session directly following the program shed light on concrete steps for civic engagement, socio-political dilemmas involved, and the impact of a directed, empowered citizenship in implementing positive change.

**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 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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