

For Immediate Release



## **AUB President at start of new academic year: ‘Embark on a personal journey of exploration’**

Beirut, Lebanon- 24/09/2012 - AUB President Peter Dorman invited students at the beginning of the academic year to embark on a personal journey of exploration, expanding their minds through interactions with others and internal reflection, by taking full advantage of the diversity and openness the University offers.

“AUB is... a place where each of us—whether students, faculty, or staff—may undertake personal journeys of exploration that have a long-lasting effect on us individually, on our friends and peers, and on our neighborhoods,” said Dorman at the official Opening Ceremony of the 2012-13 academic year which was held on September 24, 2012 at Assembly Hall. Some 2187 new students (or about 30 percent more than last year) and 51 new faculty members joined AUB this year.

Attending the event were members of the AUB Board of Trustees, deans, faculty members, and senior administrators as well as a crowd of students. The ceremony started with a procession of faculty members in academic regalia led by AUB Chief Marshal Huda Zurayk.

Dorman added that because of the “rich and challenging mix of backgrounds, talents, and opinions” within the campus walls, everyone who comes to AUB is impelled to get out of his or her comfort zones and “into different worlds of experience”—whether by interacting with people of diverse backgrounds, discussing topics that inspire critical thinking, or partaking in a study abroad experience.

“But campus life and international exchange are only the externals of diversity,” noted Dorman. “They primarily offer opportunity—but the true personal journey is an internal process that can only happen with another enabler, the tools of erudition, that is, with reading, writing, and reflection.”

For this reason, Dorman urged students to expose themselves to a broad range of reading, as “erudition allows us to exercise deep analytical thinking and gives us the ability to make relevant and novel connections across cultures and fields of knowledge.”

In a world that assesses the value of most things by putting a price on them, Dorman urged students not to evaluate the quality of their education by the salaries they might earn with their degree. Every civilization needs poets, philosophers, artists, and teachers, he said, even though these might not earn the highest salaries.

“For example,” Dorman said, “when one thinks of the Italian Renaissance, the first image that springs to mind is perhaps the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel or the works of Da Vinci and Raphael—not the Florentine banking system, as innovative as that was.”

He added: “Academic journeys ... are often begun without a clear map or any guarantee of the answer at the end of the road: pure curiosity is an essential impulse.”

For this reason, AUB’s newly drafted academic strategic plan “sets out the importance of exploring curiosity among faculties,” noted Dorman. These journeys, which begin in the mind, are taken among scientists and scholars thirsty for knowledge in its own right, and need no other justification to the outside world.”

Furthermore, Dorman said, “AUB is extraordinary from the growing body of research that is published by our faculty, an achievement that has helped propel AUB upward by 50 places this year in the international QS World Rankings, to number 250 in the world.”

He also referred to AUB’s efforts in recent years to greatly enlarge the pool of unrestricted financial aid, “so that no needy student need be turned away because of tuition fees, and so they can be offered the same journeys in life as others more fortunate.”

Dorman concluded: “In encountering diversity of opinion, richness of reading, and creativity of thought, I wish you productive and unexpected travels, and a safe harbor at the end.”

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 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the 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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