

For Immediate Release



**AUB President Dorman welcomes students to a new academic year:**  
*'Education provides the hope and promise for a more just and peaceful world'*

Beirut, Lebanon- 09/09/2013 - Education - particularly a liberal arts education that develops well-rounded, enlightened individuals - is what “provides the hope and promise for a more just and peaceful world,” said American University of Beirut President Peter Dorman during the Opening Ceremony of the 2013-14 academic year.

“For over 147 years, through times of peace and conflict, this university, in the heart of Beirut, has been welcoming new students and faculty to the optimism stimulated by a new academic year,” he said to an audience of students, faculty, deans, staff, and members of the AUB Board of Trustees, who congregated in Assembly Hall for the official ceremony marking the start of the new academic year. This year, about 8300 students are enrolled at AUB, including almost 2000 international students. Some 2078 new students and 37 new faculty members joined AUB this fall.

President Dorman delivered his opening speech, following an official procession of faculty members in academic regalia led by AUB Chief Marshal Huda Zurayk.

Quoting a past AUB honorary doctorate recipient, Elias Zerhouni, Dorman said, “While governments may rise and fall, universities persist and thrive for long centuries, ensuring the cultural and intellectual continuity on which nations are firmly grounded.”

Dorman vowed that “regardless of events, we will persevere with our commitments to our students, to their parents, and to our employees and their families, in ensuring that the legacy of this institution remains a lasting one, for Lebanon, for peoples of the Arab region, and for all those thirsty for a better life.”

Underscoring the importance of an education that prepares students for a complex, fast-paced, continuously changing world, Dorman highlighted AUB’s liberal arts education model. By developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills as well as excellent written and oral communication, promoting humanistic inquiry and freedom of expression, and encouraging creativity and teamwork, an AUB education helps prepare students for such globalized, ever-changing world, he noted.

“In a world become ever more complex and uncertain, the question, ‘Where do you see yourself five years from now?’ holds less and less relevance,” said Dorman. “So how do we best enable students to prepare themselves for varied and challenging lives?” The answer lies in developing life skills and encouraging continuous intellectual growth, through the liberal arts education model that AUB embraces.

While AUB graduates students who have marketable professional skills, it also focuses, through its liberal arts model, on producing well-rounded individuals that can face all types of challenges and embrace intellectual growth even beyond the classroom, noted Dorman. A university education is “less a training for a career, and more of an exercise in imagining the life worth living,” he said.

What’s more, close interaction with other nations “will require civic knowledge and engagement with communities, intercultural competence and understanding, ethical reasoning, and skills for lifelong learning” - skills which AUB students have the opportunity to develop during their academic careers.

Acknowledging that the humanities do not prove anything in the literal sense, Dorman argued that “they share with the physical sciences the result of taking the human creative impulse into reaches unknown and unsuspected.”

“In retrospect they establish the basis for what we acknowledge to be landmarks of a universal legacy of thought and accomplishment,” he added. “Whether it is the poetry of pre-Islamic *ghazals* or the description of the human genome, the creative impulse “urges us to relate to the world in fresh ways.”

Dorman also highlighted some of the latest changes and developments at AUB, noting that the AUB academic year is now synchronized with US and European academic calendars to make it easier for students to sign up for exchange programs abroad. In other words, the fall semester now starts in September and ends in December, before the winter holidays, and the spring semester ends at the end of May.

Moreover, Dorman noted that one of his main goals is to promote interdisciplinary studies and research during his mandate. To that effect, the Division of University Interdisciplinary Programs, was formed last year; it will champion opportunities for faculty members to engage in collaborative projects through a mechanism that recognizes and values such work.

Finally, the president recognized Lebanon’s role in helping define AUB as “a touchstone of cultures and civilizations.”

“Lebanon holds a unique position in the Arab world: it is a nation where liberal thought has long flourished, where science is pursued for its own sake, where a multitude of languages, ethnic traditions, and religious conviction come together—maybe not as one, but as an enriching plurality: the perfect laboratory for experiencing a liberal education,” Dorman said. “We at AUB are proud of our home in Lebanon and in the Arab world - indeed our milieu has helped to define this university, a touchstone of cultures and civilizations. “

“With the privileged position we enjoy at AUB come responsibilities as well,” concluded Dorman: “to foster understanding, to enable mutual respect, to nurture open minds, to commit ourselves to the betterment of our local and global communities. That is why we are here. That is why we remain. I invite you to embrace these values as fundamental hallmarks of the AUB experience. They will serve you well - as scholars and as citizens.”

ENDS

**For more information please contact:**

Maha Al-Azar, Associate Director for Media Relations, [ma110@aub.edu.lb](mailto:ma110@aub.edu.lb), 01-75 96 85

**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 8,000 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.

**Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:**

Website: [www.aub.edu.lb](http://www.aub.edu.lb)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>

Twitter: [http://twitter.com/AUB\\_Lebanon](http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon)