

## Editorial

### How can education become a transformative activity?

*Saouma Boujaoude, CTL*

Learners graduating from universities in the twenty first century need to develop a thorough knowledge and understanding of basic concepts and the problem solving and critical thinking skills that they can apply in a variety of situations, especially in everyday life and work contexts. Bridging the divide between the university and everyday life necessitates helping learners to acquire the skills to solve academic and everyday problems rather than focusing completely on academic ones. In this context, faculty members and students need to be transformed into co-inquirers of meaningful and significant issues and in the process develop robust understanding of academic content. But what is co-inquiry and is it possible that this concept would be accepted in higher education? Co-inquiry can be defined as a “group of people working together, with equal opportunities to participate, in order to examine or research an agreed topic of common interest or concern” (Armstrong & Banks, 2011). This requires that teaching be considered as inquiry but at the same time learning be implemented *through inquiry*.

*Teaching as Inquiry* is a cyclical process that requires teachers to identify students’ learning needs, determine what they need to know to be able to meet students learning needs, design tasks and learning experiences to meet students’ needs, implement their teaching, investigate the impact of their teaching on students, identify lessons learned from the teaching through a process of reflection on their own actions and the students’ results then repeat the cycle while taking into consideration what they have learned. This process works best when done in collaboration with other teachers as experts and with reference to the research literature on teaching and learning.

*Learning Through Inquiry* requires that students be involved in inquiry while learning which involves them in making observations, posing questions, examining books and other sources of information to see what is already known, planning investigations, reviewing what is already known in light of experimental evidence, using tools to gather, analyze, and interpret data, proposing answers, explanations, and predictions, and communicating the results. During inquiry, in general, students pass through five phases, specifically (1) activating prior knowledge, (2) student exploration, (3) focus on content, (4) organization of new ideas, and (5) application to new situations. But, what is the relationship between inquiry and teaching as a transformative activity? Transformative teaching is the type of teaching that challenges students to think, to question things as they are, to anticipate and consider possibilities; it encourages students to think beyond the conventional wisdom of popular culture. Characteristics of transformative teaching include the following: 1) the teacher rarely tells students what he/she thinks, 2) generally, he/she does not accept a single statement as an

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answer to a question., 3) he/she encourages student-student interaction as opposed to student-teacher interaction, generally avoids acting as a mediator or judging the quality of ideas expressed, 4) he/she rarely summarizes the positions taken by students on the learnings that occur. He/she recognizes that the act of summary or «closure» tends to have the effect of ending further thought, 5) generally, each of his/her lessons poses a problem for students, and 6) his/her lessons develop from the responses of students and not from a previously determined “logical” structure (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 33-36).

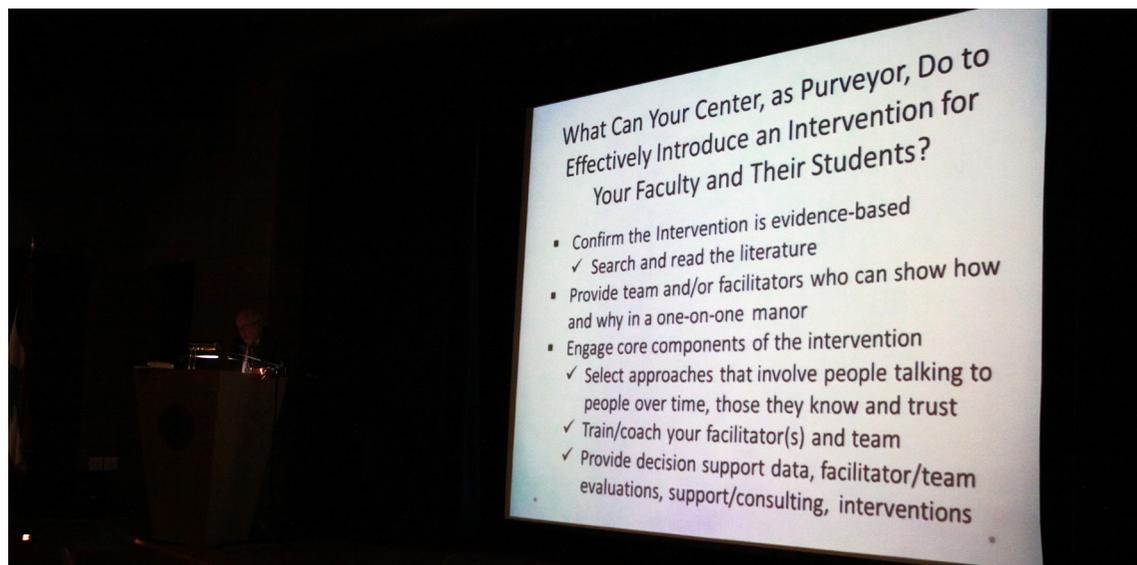
In their turn, Steinberg and Kincheloe (1998) suggest that a well prepared transformative teacher “is not one who enters the classroom with a fixed set of lesson plans but a **scholar** with a thorough knowledge of the subject, an understanding of knowledge production, the ability to produce knowledge, an appreciation of social context, a cognizance of what is happening in the world, insight into the lives of students, and a sophisticated appreciation of educational goals and purposes (p. 13).

The propositions presented above suggest that transformative teaching necessitates that teachers be inquirers and that they encourage students to be inquirers; therefore co-inquirers (Dunetz, 2005) rather than passive receivers of information. In addition, these propositions suggest different roles for the teacher and the students and different conceptions of students’ minds. Ultimately these conceptions suggest new definitions of learning and knowledge.

Moving away from traditional/transfer type teaching may not be easy or easily attainable and may require systemic change in a variety of elements of the teaching-learning process including curriculum and assessment. Moreover, this change could be planned by considering a continuum of approaches ranging from teacher directed to learner-directed teaching and learning.

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## Teaching Excellence Award

The Teaching Excellence Award Committee has voted to present this year's teaching excellence awards to **Rima Karami Akkary**, Associate Professor, Department of Education, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and **Issam Srouf**, Assistant Professor, Engineering Management, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture. A ceremony to celebrate the awardees, and through them, the many valuable efforts that AUB's faculty make to excel in teaching their students was on **May 4, 2015 at 2:00 pm in West Hall, Malhass Common Room.**

### Teaching Excellence Award Speech

*Rima Karami Akkary, FAS*

I am honored to receive this award and I am very proud to be the one bringing it to the Department of Education for the first time.

I wanted to be a teacher since I was in elementary school. My first students were my baby brother and dolls; I gave them exams and made them listen to my endless lectures.

On my journey from then to now I was blessed with amazing teachers and role models who chose to mentor me. While I have been extensively trained on the techniques of teaching as part of my studies in education, I wholeheartedly believe that the generous support and modeling of my mentors are what brought me to this moment.

From them and with them I learned: That teaching is a noble calling, which stands – like Parker Palmer said years ago, at the intersection of the private and the public, and that good teachers are those who “teach from the heart” while building “connectedness and community” and they do it with care, humility, and generosity.

I learned that it is my responsibility as a teacher, to see the best in my students and bring it to their awareness while I challenge them to seek personal and professional growth.

That it is my duty, as their teacher, to guide their learning through designing experiences responsive to their needs and aspirations, and grounded in a deep understanding of who they are.

I also learned that it is my responsibility to provide my students with a safe place where they can explore their strengths

and weaknesses, and take risks to “learn” and “unlearn;” and that it rests on me to maintain their motivation while pushing them to reach their full potential.

Above all I learned that leadership and teaching are tightly intertwined. Teachers who are leaders and leaders who are teachers are the kind of social agents we need nowadays to improve our current human and social conditions, and guard the hope that we can indeed aim for a better future.

Those have been my guiding pillars for these last 8 years at AUB . Receiving this award today comes as an affirmation to stay the course as I continue my learning journey to make my teaching live up to the ideals these pillars represent.

Please allow me to conclude with few words of thanks: First, a note of appreciation to the CTL team for safeguarding its remarkable initiative at AUB to bring the quality of teaching to the forefront where it should belong; and to the Teaching Excellence Award Committee for holding to the spirit of what this award symbolizes and putting up with my unconventional teaching portfolio.

Second, I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all my mentors. I have my mom, aunt and Dr. Bashshur with me here in Lebanon and in the US for supporting me to dare to love teaching, and to dare to teach with love and care.

My biggest thanks go to my wonderful students. Thank you for your trust and for giving me access to join you on your learning journeys. My best sense of accomplishment will always remain, these times when I watch you leave my program with a rekindled passion for learning, empowered to lead change and improvement in your schools and communities. It is, and will always be an honor and a privilege to be called your mentor and teacher.

Last and not least, I want to end with a special thank you to my students who took the time to send my nominations for this award in 2012 and this year, and to those who wrote me recommendations; also a special thank you to all my students who have been showering me for the last 8 years with their written admiring words. These words kept me going and were the main window through which the award committee members peaked at my teaching. And to all of you here, thank you for making this amazing moment possible!

## Teaching Excellence Award Speech

*Issam Srour, FEA*

They say Friday 13<sup>th</sup> is usually a cursed day. On the contrary, Friday February 13<sup>th</sup> was a blessed day for me. A few hours after submitting my teaching portfolio for the AUB Award for Excellence in Teaching, a student dropped by my office to ask questions about her term project. Her first question had nothing to do with the project:

She said: “sir you look really tired, why?”

“I stayed up until 3 am” I answered

“I did not know you guys work late too” she seemed a bit surprised

An hour later, the student left my office after discussing various topics: research, engineering, physics, grad school, in addition to the term project! Not only did this meeting give me the energy to continue working that day; but also, it reminded me of how valuable our students are. Unfortunately, I never got to tell this student how much this meeting meant to me. That student was Nicole Assaf – may her soul rest in peace.

This award goes to every single student who stays up late working hard on homework, projects, and fun activities (Outdoors, Big Game). AUB students are a source of inspiration for us all.

This award also goes to the patient and hard working parents who sacrifice a lot to send their children to AUB, which certainly was the case of my own parents. With the help of the financial aid office and the Hariri Foundation, my mother (a public school teacher) and my father (a policeman) - both public servants - were able to send their three children to AUB.

I would not be here today hadn't it been for my wife, who is by the way a better teacher than me. She edits most of my writing but I did not let her edit this speech – which is why it is probably full of mistakes.

Last but not least, credit goes to my own mentors, teachers, and the Center for Teaching and Learning for enabling excellence in teaching at AUB through seminars, workshops, research grants, and conferences...

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great honor to receive the AUB Award for Excellence in Teaching. Seeing you all here today fills my heart with joy.... Thank you.



## The Writing Center & CTL Work Together to Support Writing in the Disciplines at AUB

*Amy A. Zenger, Writing Center*

Faculty members across AUB are including more writing in their courses not only to satisfy a new General Education requirement but also because assigning writing makes good teaching sense. Studies have shown that writing in any course can allow students to engage more deeply with ideas and feel that their voices are heard. We also know that becoming a good writer—especially a good academic writer—takes time and practice across all of the university years.

Several workshops on the teaching of writing have been offered by CTL with the AUB Writing Center, a unit that supports writers and the teaching of writing. Two such workshop offerings include: “Integrating writing for active learning in your course” (Four sessions); and “From the writing classroom to writing in the disciplines: Bridging the gap.”

What is helpful for faculty members to know about using writing in their courses?

Successful writing assignments support the learning goals of the course and invite students to work on problems that do

not have a ready-made solution. Such assignments may ask students to conduct field research, analyze texts or systems in relation to a theory or concept, suggest a policy in response to a problem, or speculate about the reasons for a phenomenon.

Writing in the disciplines courses also benefit from using writing to generate ideas through informal, exploratory forms like journals entries, reading responses, or online discussions.

Finally, a number of strategies for responding to student writers aim to encourage meaningful revision while managing faculty members’ time.

The goal of AUB’s writing in the disciplines initiative is to strengthen the university’s liberal arts mission by giving students more opportunities to write about their ideas and to be coached into ways of thinking and communicating in their fields.



## Fall Semester Activities

September 1st, 2014 – December 31st, 2014

**Workshops, Seminars, and Panels.** CTL hosted 2 brown bag meetings one entitled Higher Order Thinking on Sept. 24 and another entitled Gamification on Nov. 5 in collaboration with IT Academic Services. Additionally, CTL hosted a 4-session Seminar on Teaching Writing in collaboration with the Writing Center between Oct. 8 and Oct. 29; a seminar on Compiling and Assessing Teaching Portfolios was held on Nov. 27. A workshop entitled Flipping Your Classroom to Increase Student Engagement and Learning was given on Oct. 9, another on Interactive Lecturing in Large Classes on Oct. 30, and in collaboration with Jafet Library, a workshop entitled How to Download and Read Offline E-books from AUB Libraries was offered on Nov.13. Additionally, CTL continued its efforts in assessment of program learning outcomes by organizing two workshops on Developing and Assessing Program Learning Outcomes on Dec. 4 and 9. Finally, CTL organized two meetings with program learning outcomes facilitators and accreditation officers in all faculties on Oct. 2 and Nov. 6 to discuss issues related to PLO assessment and report writing. Most of these activities were first discussed in a meeting of the CTL Advisory Committee which met on October 23, 2014.

## Spring Semester Activities

January 1st, 2015– April 30th, 2015

The workshops and seminars presented during this period included a presentation in the New Faculty Orientation on Jan. 23, a workshop on Social Media and Its Impact on Improving Teaching on March 3, a workshop on Action Research on March 16, a presentation for the Lebanese Army officers on March 18, and a conference on Turnitin and academic integrity on March 23 (in collaboration with Jafet Library), a Brown bag on Rethinking Course Content on April 1 (in collaboration with IT Academic Services), in addition to a Brown bag titled An Insight on Online Diplomas on May 6.

Additionally, CTL organized its annual faculty Seminar on Teaching and Learning Excellence. The seminar included seven sessions and was held every Tuesday from 5:00 to 7:00 pm from March 17 to April 28, 2015. Each session discussed a different topic. Participants in the Seminar included 14 faculty members and PhD students. Moreover, other faculty guests attended a number of sessions because of their interest in the session topic. These activities were discussed in a meeting with the CTL Advisory Committee which met on Thursday, March 12 in addition to a lunch meeting on Monday 30th, 2015 at 12:00.



### **Fifth International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.**

CTL, the IT Academic Services Department and the Communication Skills Program of the English Department organized the 5th annual Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education on Feb 6 and 7, 2015 and have been working on preparations for the 2016 annual conference

### **CTL Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.**

The year four of the scholarship of teaching grants program was launched with a deadline of April 15 for submitting proposals, Five proposals were received, three of which were funded with a start date of July 1, 2015.

**Faculty Learning Communities.** One faculty learning community (FLC) on Higher Order Thinking was active during fall 2014-2015. While a newly established Faculty Learning Community on Student Reasoning continued its work with support from CTL.

**AUB Teaching Excellence Award.** CTL received 40 nominations, of which 24 accepted the nominations for the AUB Teaching Excellence Award. After thorough deliberations, the Teaching Excellence Award Committee selected two winners: Issam Srour from FEA and Rima Karami Akkary from FAS. The winners were celebrated in a ceremony on May 4, 2015.

**Individual Consultations.** Individual consultations based on faculty requests were held. Discussions in these consultations ranged from program learning outcomes, to course syllabus design, compiling a teaching portfolio, and writing proposals for conducting research on teaching and learning. In addition, CTL provided feedback to HSON and FHS on their proposed Inter-professional Services Program. And peer observation visits were conducted upon the request of colleagues.

**Work with REP.** Finally, as part of a REP agreement with AUB, CTL gave two workshops at Rafic Harir University and one workshop at Fahd Bin Sultan University in KSA. also CTL is planning to prepare training manuals on a variety of topics for Princess Noura Bint Abdel Raman University in Riyadh, KSA and provide consultations to Ahfad University for Women in Sudan.

#### **CTL Staff**

**Director: Dr. Saouma Boujaoude**

**Associate Director: Dr. Amal BouZeineddine**

**Administrative Officer: Miss Lamia Hussein**





## Putting Theory into Practice: A Report on a CTL-Supported Professional Development Seminar in the Communication Skills Program at AUB

*Lisa R. Arnold, FAS*

In recent years, AUB has made an explicit commitment to improving the writing abilities of its students, and it has recently made several strategic decisions, in terms of hiring and programmatic structure, in line with this commitment. From 2012-2014, I served as the Director of the Communication Skills Program, which is housed within the Department of English; in this role, I explored a number of avenues through which I could offer faculty teaching within the program opportunities for professional development. In particular, I pursued activities that would improve faculty members' knowledge of the field of Rhetoric and Composition; foster the development of a "community of practice" within the department; and ultimately serve students, who would benefit from improved teaching and learning environments. One of these opportunities, a 10-session professional development seminar on theory in Rhetoric and Composition, was offered during AY 2013-14 with the support of a CTL Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Grant.

Rhetoric and Composition is an academic discipline based in the U.S. that has emerged over the last 40 years; research in the field ranges from rhetorical analyses of non-literary texts, to the study of writing instruction at the university level, to examination of the writing processes and practices of adults, particularly adult learners. The Communication Skills Program at AUB serves approximately 3,000 students each academic year and currently employs 27 full-time instructors, who teach the majority of these students. The Program serves the entire university and prepares students to write and communicate in a wide variety of academic and non-academic contexts. In short, the university administration, faculty across the disciplines, and members of the local and international community place high stakes on the Communication Skills Program in preparing students to demonstrate writing ability that reflects AUB's standards. Thus, the Program's effectiveness ultimately hinges on the continued professional development of its instructors.

The purpose of the seminar was to enable Communication Skills faculty to benefit from the university's commitment to writing by providing them with an incentive to learn more about current Rhetoric and Composition theories of writing instruction, to encourage self-reflection about teaching practices, and to apply Rhetoric and Composition scholarship to the Communication Skills context when appropriate.

In total, seventeen faculty members – some new to the department and to teaching, and some having more than 30 years of experience – participated in the seminar. Five faculty members who had previously audited a graduate course that I offered on the same topic acted as facilitators for the two-hour sessions (each facilitator planned and led two sessions), and I sat in on every session, acting as a participant-observer. Throughout the seminar, in addition to in-class discussions about assigned readings in Rhetoric and Composition, participants were offered the opportunity to reflect in writing on their pedagogical practice, responding to guided questions about the relevance of the readings to the context of writing instruction at AUB. Fourteen participants and facilitators also voluntarily sat for hour-long, IRB-approved interviews with me during the course of the seminar. During these interviews, we discussed the seminar sessions and topics that seemed most relevant to faculty members' work as writing teachers, the difference between U.S.-based and MENA-based contexts of writing pedagogy, and their thoughts about the effectiveness of the seminar as a professional development opportunity.

Responses to the seminar were wide-ranging; however, all participants found the seminar to be a generally positive experience, in that it offered participants the opportunity to reflect on and exchange ideas with colleagues about pedagogy. While participants received small stipends for attendance, all said they would be willing to attend a similar seminar in the future if it were offered without monetary compensation – the experience of participating in a "community of practice" carried a high non-material value for all who attended the seminar.

Every teacher faces discipline-specific challenges in developing effective teaching and learning practices within specific educational and institutional contexts. What's more, even the strongest researchers may struggle with or become frustrated by teaching; these individuals could benefit from, and become motivated by, exposure to discipline-specific scholarship on teaching and learning. The Communication Skills Program seminar demonstrates one way through which discussions about pedagogy and the development of intra-departmental "communities of practice" can be fostered and rewarded.

## The Role of Engineering Education in Fostering Innovative and Sustainable Entrepreneurship

*Mona Itani and Issam Srour, FEA*

The increasingly difficult economic conditions in many developing countries have raised a need to create sustainable knowledge economies by investing and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship. In order to form a better understanding of young and innovative entrepreneurship for engineering graduates in the areas of technology and sustainability, a research project was conducted at the American University of Beirut's Faculty of Engineering and Architecture. The project, which was funded by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), aims at investigating the phenomenon of student and young entrepreneurship, and identifying and documenting the needs of young graduates from their academic institutions in order to further foster this trend. To form a proper understanding of this phenomenon and be able to recommend improvements to engineering education, which has a responsibility to graduate innovative people with a capability of making a positive social and environmental impact in the world, the academic and entrepreneurship ecosystems in the developing country under study were approached. The main objective of the study is to determine how entrepreneurship education should be offered or reformed at the university level, based on the most important needs of university students in order to enable an easier start for their entrepreneurial journey in innovative technology. The adopted methodology included surveying and interviewing more than 30

individuals ranging from senior university students, professors, entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurial supporters. The utilized mixed-methods approach consisted of filling a short questionnaire and answering a set of open-ended questions. This approach allowed for collecting important information from the experiences of the interviewees, many of which were entrepreneurs, such as their needs, faced difficulties, and lessons learned. The mix of quantitative and qualitative methods enhanced the ability to make more meaningful conclusions. Findings recommended the transformation of entrepreneurship education in engineering schools to a much more hands-on experience with emphasis on incorporating projects, engaging real entrepreneurs in such programs, and exposing students to successful entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship projects as role models and motivators for pursuing such a risky journey. Students emphasized on the need to offer contemporary technical courses that expose them to topics, technologies, and applications that have the potential in being developed and transformed to new ventures such as advanced and sustainable development courses. The interviewees highlighted the crucial role of academic institutions in providing networking opportunities with investors and funders, in addition to business workshops based on new trends and best practices that help students in business planning, iterating, and pitching.



## Raising Awareness for Quality in E-Learning

Rayane Fayed, ACPS

Both educators and learners find themselves in a learning landscape that is continuously and dramatically evolving in terms of the strategies through which learning is acquired, the purposes behind implementing different modalities, and the context in which learning materializes. One of the foremost changes is happening on the level of educational technologies.

ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in education lives a life at crossroads between evidence based policy making, learning and the fast changing world of technology (Scheuermann & Pedro, n.d.).

The existence of different delivery formats (Web-Enhanced, Blended and Online Learning), the use of mobile learning, and the promotion of Open Educational Resources have altered the concept about where and how learning takes place.

Some of the ways in which AUB is responding to the needs arising from the pedagogical and technological evolution, are through the development of coherent strategies to assess the impact of educational technologies on teaching and learning, and to implement models that ensure efficient delivery means and active engagement in the courses. Yet, another strategy employed, focuses on faculty members' professional development and support, highlighting researched strategies that enrich the experience of learners in the different course delivery formats.

Throughout the professional development activities, different instructional design systems are used, such as ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) to lead participants through the course design process. This method is based on the "Backward Design" model, which requires the design to start by assessing the Learning Outcomes. The "Blended Training" is one of the many opportunities offered to faculty members who seek to redesign their courses. Every semester since the spring of 2009, the instructional designers on campus have delivered a 5 weeks blended training. The training itself is delivered in

a blended format, with two weeks online and three weeks face-to-face followed by a month of one-on-one instructional design consultation. Up until the spring semester of 2015, 85 course sections were redesigned and offered at least once in a Blended format.

Another type of training aims to relook at the course resources and implement ways to transform them into an interactive engaging content through the use of different technology tools such as Articulate Storyline.

This spring semester witnessed the launch of the PRO-GREEN Online Diploma. Through the PRO-GREEN project, partner universities from Egypt and Lebanon developed a joint/dual online diploma for green technologies with a focus on renewable energies, green buildings and water resources. The design of the online courses gave the opportunity to professionals, from both Lebanon and the region, who are committed to full time jobs, to enroll in this diploma and benefit from an international experience and applied theories related to green technologies. This Diploma wouldn't have happened without the commitment of all faculty members involved, the coordination team and the efforts of the eLearning team, who has intensively worked with every member involved to ensure a quality design of the online courses.

One of the lessons learned is that the integration of technology does not happen by adjusting an existing course to include technology; faculty members can best embrace educational technologies while designing or redesigning their courses.

Overall, the success story behind the integration of educational technologies into the very idea of teaching and learning heavily relies on the empowerment of pedagogy over technology.

### References:

*Scheuermann, F., & Pedro, F. (n.d.). Assessing the effects of ICT in education.*



## CTL Conference Welcome Speech

*Patrick McGreevy, Dean, FAS*

Good Morning.

On behalf of the American University of Beirut, I would like to welcome you all to AUB's 5th International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning. A special welcome to those who have journeyed from afar—Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the US. Ahlan wa Sahlan.

There is nothing more crucial for the Arab region than improving education at every level. When it comes to higher education—the focus of this conference—it is time to get very serious about improvement. There is an industry of pundits, trying to help us adapt to new circumstances, but I would like to suggest that universities should not merely be adapting: they should be leading. AUB was founded in 1866—that makes it older than every nation state in the Arab world. It has survived and prospered through an alertness to its complex context and a willingness to transform itself. University researchers have produced growing body of scholarship on teaching and learning, but what we have learned we ourselves too often ignore.

We are in a time of rapid transformation, yet I fear we are drawing the wrong lessons from it. How much should we listen to the requests of students for concrete knowledge and specialized skills they hope will guarantee employment? How much should we listen to what the market currently demands? I think we need to ask these questions even though I also think that our students and the most forward-looking enterprises are often more ready for change than are universities themselves.

It is time to ask the most serious and fundamental questions: what is the purpose of university education? What are we preparing students for? The US Department of Labor predicts that 65% of primary school children will grow up to work in jobs that do not yet exist. How do we prepare them for that? I was talking to one of my seasoned colleagues about all we had to learn after graduating from university: when I entered the University of Notre Dame in 1968, few students had anything to do with computers which required typing every line of code on a physical card. We later had to learn

to use mainframe workstations, then mini computers, then personal computers, then word processors and spreadsheets, then email, the world wide web, and everything that has followed. Twitter didn't exist 5 years ago; Facebook didn't exist 10 years ago. What allowed us to adapt to these changes was not an intensive focus on how to use computer cards. It was not so much the specifics of what our teachers knew that mattered: it was how they thought, how they approached a problem. And, in a way, these technological changes were far less challenging than the morphing nature of social, political and cultural realities. We found ourselves in an increasingly hybrid transnational world, and stable ideas were challenged.

A basic change most academics encountered was a new paradigm of communication. Instead of a one-way model of sender and receiver, we realized that there was, in fact, a human being at the other end who has a world that may not be the same as ours. Both sides are entangled; neither is inherently privileged. The fundamental insight, for education, is simply that students are real human beings, capable of thinking, judging, and reflexively grasping that others around them are as well.

I was attracted to working in higher education, most likely, because I was myself transformed by my experience as an undergraduate, though I was not entirely aware of it at the time. I was fortunate to have teachers who inspired me, made me excited about learning. They challenged me to think about significance rather than self-interest. They treated me as fully human.

The information delivery part of education has been called into question—when practically all information one could need is always instantly available. But information delivery is not where higher education adds real value. When I think of my own educational journey, I am convinced that face-to-face interaction should remain at the very center because education is fundamentally a human encounter that cannot be pre-scripted.

There is a reason why people come to conferences like this—we could have all just stayed home and communicated electronically. I wish you all some fruitful face-to-face encounters during the next two days.

## Fifth International Conference on Effective Teaching & Learning in Higher Education

For the fifth year in a row, and in collaboration with the IT Academic Services Department, and the Communication Skills Program at the American University of Beirut, the International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education was held on February 6 and 7, 2015.

The conference was divided into five strands: (1) Assessment of Program and Course Learning Outcomes in Higher Education; (2) Community-Based Learning and Community Service; (3) E-learning and Pedagogy; (4) Teaching, Learning and Assessment Procedures in Higher Education; (5) Writing Instruction and Research in Higher Education

The Conference included five pre-conference workshops entitled: (1) Assessing Student Writing Across Disciplines, presented by Jennifer Nish, Zane Sinno and Malakeh Khoury; (2) Developing Rubrics to Assess Learning Outcomes, presented by Amal BouZeineddine; (3) Flipping your classroom to increase student engagement and learning, presented by Saouma Boujaoude; (4) Articulate Storyline: Rethinking Course Content, presented by Hossain Hamam; (5)

E-learning Course Design Toolkit, presented by Rana Haddad. Moreover, three keynote speakers presented speeches at the conference: (1) “Is Active Learning Not Working? Answering and Solutions from Implementation Science” by Milton D. Cox, founder and Director Emeritus of the Center for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching, and University Assessment at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio; (2) “Making the Digital Future: Debates, Designs and Dilemmas by Mark Brown, Director of the National Institute for Digital Learning (NIDL) based at Dublin City University (DCU); (3) “Successful Implementation of Writing Centers: How Collaborative Learning Contributes to the Centers’ Sustainability” by Katrin Girgensohn, faculty member and founder of the Writing Center at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder)/Germany.

**For more information about the conference, please visit the website at <http://www.aub.edu.lb/conferences/etlhe/Pages/index.aspx>**

