President Dorman, Dr. Bahij Arbid representing HE Minister of Health Wael Abu Faour, honored guests, faculty, students and friends of HSON

On behalf of my colleagues at HSON, I welcome all of you to this special event to celebrate the chartering of the first Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society Chapter in the Middle East, the Chi Iota Chapter. Today’s conference on ‘Advancing the Nursing Research Agenda in Lebanon’ paves the way to important future developments in the nursing profession. We are delighted that you are able to join us to make this event a memorable one. I am especially delighted to welcome our speakers and international guests. You will be pleased to know that three of them are graduates of AUB SON. For one of them in particular, this trip is a pilgrimage to AUB and to Lebanon after 40 years of absence. Thank you again for accepting our invitation to be with us today. We are looking forward to your valuable contributions to this conference.

As many of you know, the SON at AUB has a long and distinguished history; as president Dorman said, it was founded in 1905 as the first School of Nursing in Lebanon and the Middle East. We celebrated our centennial in 2005, and God willing we will be celebrating our 110th anniversary in 2015. In 2004, the school launched the Master of Science in Nursing which currently has four tracks, nursing administration, adult care, Psychiatry and Mental Health, and Community Nursing. The program is attracting students from Lebanon and the region and has prepared many graduates for leadership and clinical positions in the country and abroad. More recently, the school has pioneered the launching of an
accelerated second degree program for BA and BS holders. This program is particularly attractive for applicants from the USA and we hope it will attract degree holders from Lebanon and the region. The emphasis in this program is education for employment.

Also many of you know that the School of Nursing was granted unconditional accreditation in 2007 by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education and was reaccredited in 2012 for a period of 10 years making AUB SON the first to be accredited by CCNE outside the USA. HSON continues to be a regular member of the prestigious American Association of Colleges of Nursing in the USA allowing me to attend all deans’ meetings in the USA and to stay current on all developments in nursing.

In recent years, the SON has placed more emphasis on research and scholarly productivity of faculty. Despite the international faculty shortage we were able to recruit and appoint a good number of PhD-prepared and research-active faculty and to support junior faculty to get their PhDs. Capacity building has been a major goal for the school and will continue to be so in the future. To date, the majority of our full time faculty is PhD holder with own program of research. AUB SON currently has 21 full time, 35 part-time, and 12 adjunct faculty in addition to 3-4 visiting faculty per year. I am also happy to say that our research and scholarly productivity has witnessed an exponential growth averaging last year 2.5 scientific publications per faculty member.

Establishing an Honor Society Chapter has been a goal for the school for a number of years but we kept it intentionally on the back burner in order to address other priorities. It did not stay silent for a long time! In 2011 HSON established the AUB SON Honor Society of
Nursing and applied to become a Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International. We were approved in November 2013; a milestone event in the history of the SON at AUB which is being celebrated today. The chartering was planned in May 2014 and moved to September due to scheduling and logistical issues. We are of course delighted to have Dr. Hester Klopper, President of STTI, to officiate the chartering ceremony tomorrow at 3pm. I am hoping all of you will be able to join us then.

Ladies and Gentleman, the Mission of the School of Nursing has always been to promote and maintain the highest educational standards of excellence, integrity, and professionalism, by preparing high quality nurses for which there is a strong demand in Lebanon and abroad. This mission will continue to guide our strategic plans as we grow in student numbers, faculty, and academic programs to meet the new challenges ahead of us and to align ourselves with the AUBMC 2020 vision.

The school of nursing has a number of ambitious plans for the coming few years: 1) we are hoping to increase our annual UG enrollment to 85, 3) continue to increase the number of PhD holder faculty, 3) we hope to offer a PhD degree in Nursing Science in close collaboration with FM, FHS, Johns Hopkins University SON, and University of Michigan SON, and 4) to establish a Centre of Excellence in Nursing Research.

The introduction of innovative academic programs, the greater focus on research, the recruitment of faculty and students, and the creation of scholarships, are helping to transform the face of nursing in Lebanon and in the region – enhancing its prestige and making nursing a more attractive career for growing numbers of men and women.
Throughout this period of exponential growth, we have received wonderful support from colleagues at AUB and AUBMC for which we are very grateful. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who worked hard to make this event possible and in particular the faculty and staff of the HSON, the SON STTI Honor Society Board, the SON Research Committee, and the untiring work of all my assistants and in particular Ghassan Afram. I know I speak on behalf of my colleagues at HSON when I say, we consider ourselves privileged to be a part of this historic development and to serve this great institution that we all love and call AUB.

I look forward to a productive and thought-provoking meeting.

Huda Huijer  
September 12, 2014