The Power of Hope
The AUB campus is both a botanic garden and a bird sanctuary.
After eight years as president of the American University of Beirut, I see more than ever how AUB can contribute to the development of a sustainable economy in our host nation, Lebanon, where we have deep and permanent roots. As educators and as the largest private sector employer in the country, we are uniquely positioned to help.

Having witnessed the talent of AUB’s faculty and students as well as the unrelenting exodus of Lebanon’s youth to jobs and futures in other countries, I wonder how to help reverse this long-standing trend? And if successful, how can we extend this success to other citizens of the Global South, who also count our university as home?

Lebanon, like AUB, must be built on the twin pillars of belonging and accountability. It is the foundation of our VITAL strategic plan, which we began to implement in 2020. The five pillars of VITAL are the sharing of our liberal and inclusive values, enhancing and translating our capacity for innovation, transforming the university experience, advancing our research excellence, and lifting the quality of life and health across the region.

Despite the ravages of the last few years, AUB recently welcomed one of its largest and most academically excellent student cohorts. We also maintained student diversity, with international students making up approximately 20 percent of the population, and citizens of more than 80 countries currently enrolled or working at AUB. We are actively enhancing our educational offerings to better empower tomorrow’s citizen leaders for the challenges they will face in under-resourced, nascent nation-states. AUB must lead through modernizing our curriculum, expanding our academic offerings, and extending our reach, graduating leaders who are job creators. In an era where much work is performed at a distance, we must ensure that more of those jobs are created and filled in Lebanon and the region. This will lead to more participatory, sustainable, and modern economies.

The VITAL realignment of AUB is focused on critical goals: to lead the development of modern, diversified, inclusive, and sustainable nations, where citizenship, ownership, belonging, and accountability lead to a more abundant life for all.

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Aiducation.

Samer Karimeh grew up in a middle-class family in Tripoli. His father, who retired recently, was a medical laboratory doctor who provided well for his wife and three sons. Like many families in Lebanon, however, Samer’s family has been impacted by the financial and economic collapse of Lebanon, which has dramatically decreased the value of the Lebanese pound—the currency in which most of his family’s income is denominated. Being able to attend AUB was one of Samer’s dreams growing up, but it is not something he would be able to do were it not for the support he is receiving from the His Highness, the Father Emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani Scholarship through the Embassy of the State of Qatar. “Being able to do my master’s degree in finance at AUB, one of the most important universities in the Middle East, will open the gateway to different job opportunities around the world. AUB is preparing me for the next step in my career,” he says.
The beginning of the spring semester saw a new cohort of international and visiting students introduced to campus by their Office of International Program mentors.

Students from the Faculty of Health Sciences performed an “ambulant theater” at various spots around campus to reinforce the importance of public health.

The Natural History Museum displayed their amazing collections of insects and plants: from beetles and butterflies to pressed flowers and leaves, it showcased “a legacy carried forward” since 1866.
There is always something going on at West Hall! Here, a band plays to promote auditions for live acts for the return of AUB Outdoors.

The second edition of the Undergraduate Open House saw prospective students and their families enjoying a vibrant atmosphere on the Green Oval and activities across campus.

IDEAS, the flagship spring event for MSFEA, showcased the richness and diversity of engineering, architecture, and design as academic disciplines and drivers of innovation.

The 8th Mahmoud Kahil Awards was followed the next day by the inauguration of the Rada & Mutaz Sawaf Center for Arab Comics Studies at AUB.
Students of the Next Step program at AUB, designed for young adults with intellectual challenges, displayed their artwork at an exhibition in West Hall.

The AUB Choir rises again! This year saw the return of the choir, conducted by Arlette Khayata, with student, faculty, and staff performers. The spring concert featured nostalgic songs from the 1960s.
The first Glass Art Show at AUB was held with the Chemistry Department’s own master glass blower, Boutros Sawaya.

The largest student-led event in the region, AUB Outdoors returned after a three-year hiatus to great fanfare and fun for all under the theme of “The World Tour.”

The 2nd Math Olympiad saw 700 high school students compete, 71 make it to phase 2, and 10 ultimate winners, solving math problems that emphasize ingenuity and imagination over technical prowess.
Discipline, character, and perseverance. These are some of the foundational tenets that have guided Tarek Abou Omar, newly appointed director of the Charles Hostler Student Center, throughout his life. “I developed these values from being in martial arts very early. It can be tough to balance academia and athletics, but I’ve always felt that, eventually, the two would feed into each other. This opportunity brought both,” says Tarek. Though being appointed director was not something he had planned for, it was an opportunity he had inadvertently been training for.

Tarek is no stranger to AUB. As a graduate of AUB’s Master of Science in Environmental Health in 2017, he fell in love with the university and dreamed of returning one day. “I remember being at the Charles Hostler Student Center, looking at the sea and feeling very happy in that moment. I thought, how can I come back one day?” After spending a few years abroad earning a PhD and teaching at other institutions, that wish has come true.

As an international coach in martial arts with an academic background in public health, Tarek brings his passion for both athletics and science to the Charles Hostler Student Center and is building a mission around athletics, recreation, and wellness. “Health is indivisible, and it is tightly linked to exercise, diet, and lifestyle,” says Tarek.

The Charles Hostler Student Center is one of Lebanon’s top recreational and sports complexes, presenting opportunities that Tarek is eager to explore for the AUB community and beyond. “We want to maximize our athletic potential, keep the community active and contribute to the dissemination of science on exercise, health, and wellness through collaborations with research entities at AUB,” he says. He is developing programs for self-defense, swimming, and other sports and is collaborating on developing a diploma certification in nutrition, fitness, and health for personal trainers.

Tarek brings decades of passion for athletics and health to AUB during a critical time. In the face of Lebanon’s multiple adversities, his belief in athletics and wellness support has the potential to reimagine the Charles Hostler Student Center. “Despite all the challenges, I’ve always been interested in doing something for Lebanon, and there is no better place to start than AUB,” he says.
Martin Waehlisch and Daanish Masood Alavi were interested in how to make sense of political conversations in Arabic on social media as part of their work for the Innovation Cell of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA). It was 2019, and they were asking themselves how these social media conversations unfold and how they mirror the political landscape.

They knew computer natural language processing (NLP) could help, but commercially available programs analyze languages like English, French, or German, not the vast array of Arabic dialects, much less the colloquial phrases of social media. They reasoned that if NLP technology existed for Arabic dialects, it could be applied to different kinds of signals that express public sentiments across all sectors of society, offering real-time insights into people’s reactions to regional issues. They began searching for academics who could take on the project, not for commercial profit but for social good. That was how they found Professor Fadi Zaraket of AUB’s Electrical and Computer Engineering Department, one of the top researchers in this field.

Four years later, a UN DPPA collaboration with AUB and Birzeit University has produced a series of groundbreaking computer-readable dictionaries and resources for Yemeni, Iraqi, Sudanese, and Libyan dialects. Zaraket, who co-led the project, says, “To allow computers to capture and sort the views of thousands and even millions of people from social media posts, the NLP process had to treat each dialect as a separate language. These open-source resources are now available globally to researchers, students, and peacebuilding practitioners.”

Waehlisch adds, “The technology will allow UN officials involved in conflict resolution to decipher some of the coded political language in local dialects to better understand public sentiments and social trends.” Alavi and Waehlisch maintain the NLP technology can help make political processes more inclusive, uncover counterintuitive insights, and assist in the monitoring of human rights and ceasefire violations.

As much as has been accomplished, all agree the work needs further support and engagement to expand and scale the possibilities. “It’s a great example,” Waehlisch says, “of how research can be put to use for the good of humanity.”
A Qur'an section produced in Konya, Anatolia dated A.H. 845 / A.D. 1441. Manuscript Collection, Archives and Special Collections Department, AUB Libraries
Digitizing Our History

Among the many artifacts from the newly digitized personal archive of Lebanese writer, poet, historian, and journalist Isa Iskandar al-Maʻluf is a postcard featuring a military ceremony marking the departure of Henry de Jouvenel, former high commissioner of France in the Levant. Goosestepping French soldiers march at the Place des Canons, the Martyr’s Square of yesteryear. It’s the kind of postcard a French military man serving in the Levant in the 1920s might have sent to a relative back home, a symbol of colonial patriotism, the empire celebrating itself.

“These postcards, documents, photos communicate a lot of visual and cultural information, but they are becoming old and worn, and they need to be preserved,” says Elie Kahle, AUB’s director of digital initiatives and scholarship. “And then there’s the regional unrest, the power outages, and lately, the earthquakes.” To that end, Kahle and archivists at AUB have been working hard to digitize as much historically significant, or even potentially historically significant, material as possible.

AUB has been digitizing documents for many years. The university helped build the NYU-hosted Arabic Collections Online, a publicly available digital library of public domain Arabic language content. Today, its newest partner is the British Library—the national library of the United Kingdom and one of the world’s largest libraries. The partnership began when AUB received al-Maʻluf’s personal archive and applied for a grant to fund its preservation. The al-Maʻluf collection is now online on both the AUB Library and the British Library websites.

Following that initial collaboration, the British Library approached AUB to discuss its new Endangered Archive Program (EAP), the idea behind the program being that pre-1950s documents and photos in strife-filled parts of the world must be preserved, and quickly, before being destroyed by wars, disasters, and decaying infrastructure.

Not long ago, microfilms containing original images of Lebanese political and literary journals from the 19th century were on the verge of irreparable degradation because the climate-controlled environment they require to maintain their integrity kept failing due to blackouts. “We were on the verge of losing them, so we took emergency action and moved them to a more stable location in the Conservation and Preservation section of the University Libraries,” Kahle explains.

“We want to establish a network of hubs throughout the MENA region that will facilitate applications to EAP. AUB’s role here is that of an advocate,” he adds. “We are empowering our community, we are advertising for the program and helping to recruit potential participants in the program.”

Starting in March, AUB began hosting workshops on campus on digitization and preservation. “Let’s say you have a personal archive but you don’t know how to preserve it. We will train you in preservation for free, and at the same time, you can apply to receive funding for it from the British Library.”

The small grants can fund the purchase of a scanner or camera, lighting, and color-checking equipment, all of which can be used to most accurately render documents digitally.

“AUB, in line with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, is working to safeguard Lebanon’s and the wider Middle East’s cultural heritage. We hope to be known as a regional center for excellence for digitization and cultural preservation.”

We are empowering our community.
Published & Produced

Other works:

- **Chaos That Never Ends**
  Written by Gladys Mouro (BS Nursing ’76)

- **Khotoot wa Alwan [Lines and Colours]**
  Written by Raghid Nahhas (BS ’73 MS ’76)

- **My Artist Life: A Path of Creativity**
  Written by Muriel Angelil (BS ’55)

- **The Dolphin’s Dance: Discover Your True Self through a Powerful 5-Step Journey into Conscious Awareness**
  Written by Micheline Nader (BS ’76 MS ’78)

- **Le Barrage**
  *Film*

  Screenplay by Ali Cherri (BFA Graphic Design’ 00), Geoffroy Grison, in collaboration with Bertrand Bonello

  Set in Sudan, near the Merowe dam, Maher works in a traditional brickyard fed by the waters of the Nile. Every evening, he secretly wanders off into the desert to build a mysterious construction made of mud. While the Sudanese people rise to claim their freedom, his creation starts to take a life of its own.

- **Women Hold Up Half the Sky**
  *Short Film*

  This short film by George Azar explores the lives of five Lebanese women in the years 2019-2020 as they navigate crisis after crisis. These women risk it all in their struggle for equality.

  Azar is AUB’s photo-journalist-in-residence and a faculty member in the Media Studies Program.

  [Watch the full film here](#)

- **Peace: Spiritual Insights from Mystical Sites to Promote Peace**
  Written by Mary Clement (JYA ’63–’64)

- **Medical Cannabis and the Effects of Cannabinoids on Fighting Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Epilepsy, Parkinson’s, and Other Neurodegenerative Diseases**
  Written by Rana R. Zeine (BS ’83 MD ’87) and Brian W. Teasdale
Reverie
A Soaring Soul That’s Free and Light

“My son was in a daydreaming state while he stood for a moment behind the curtains moving slowly with the breeze. The sight gave me an overwhelming sensation of both nostalgia and tranquility, so I captured it. Art is not about the angle, the beauty and colors only, its purpose is to transfer the feeling of that specific moment in time.”

Amal Sabsabi is a graphic designer at the American University of Beirut. In addition to her talent for design, she has a keen eye for photography. Sabsabi has a deep passion for creative arts and constantly explores new ways to express her artistic vision.

Creative Minds
Featuring original works
from the American University of Beirut community
154th Commencement Exercises
June 9 & 10, 2023
When did you begin working on the AUB Mediterraneo project?
I was appointed executive director of this project in September 2021. I have been the rector of AUB Mediterraneo since January 2023.

What has been the biggest challenge in establishing AUB’s first twin campus outside of Lebanon?
Establishing even just a small company in a foreign country is a challenging task, so you can imagine the challenges involved in creating a university within a very tight timeline. I would say that the biggest challenge has been coordinating the efforts of all the people in Lebanon and Cyprus whose contributions are essential to the success of AUB Mediterraneo. There are a lot of moving parts that need to be in sync—coordinating efforts with our partners, the Municipality of Pafos and its mayor; securing accreditation from the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAQA) and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in the US; working with the professors who are developing the academic programs; following up with the contractors who are building the new campus; implementing effective communication and student recruitment strategies—and those are just some of the moving parts!

What will AUB Mediterraneo look like in fall 2023 when we will be welcoming the first cohort of students?
We expect a strong and diverse cohort of mostly first-year students enrolled in the undergraduate programs in philosophy, politics, and economics; psychology; computer science; industrial engineering; and business administration. We will also be welcoming first-year graduate students enrolled in engineering management and business analytics. Our goal is to welcome students to the new campus that we are constructing in the heart of Pafos at the site of the old Carob Mills complex. If the campus is not ready in time, we will begin classes at a wonderful facility that is owned by the Municipality of Pafos.
Welcome to the Hub

Rudina Antoun (BArch ’09) used to be fascinated by designing buildings. Now project manager of AUB’s Abdulla al Ghurair Hub for Digital Teaching and Learning, she focuses on designing processes. “We are creating online learning opportunities from scratch,” she says, “and we are making a difference. This is remarkable.”

Within the university-wide AUB Online focus, the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture partnered with the Abdulla al Ghurair Foundation (AGF). Launched in June 2021, the Education Hub promotes innovation in online STEM education and increased access to high-quality education for Arab youth, specifically underserved youth of the region. The objectives are two-pronged: to launch online programs and to digitize residential courses.

Antoun says it’s challenging “to make education accessible for a diverse population. How do we do that for people who cannot relocate to Lebanon, or to those who require financial aid, for refugees, for first-generation students? How do we reach our target audience, make it financially feasible for them to enroll in courses, and most importantly, find the courses that best serve them?”

Recently, the program has outfitted two studios in the Munib and Angela Masri Building, where faculty can record material, create content, and work with an instructional designer. The first is a “one-button studio,” which faculty operate by themselves. The other is a state-of-the-art studio with an experienced production manager.

The director of the Hub, Dr. Issam Srour, says it’s been hard to learn how to create an e-commerce experience for students while also getting an understanding of the world of digital marketing. “And we have to create courses at the desired pace, but with limited faculty availability.”

Despite the challenges, Srour says the biggest reward is making a difference in the lives of students who would not make it to AUB other than through online education. In less than six months, they attracted more than 130 students to the Project Management Professional Diploma and 50 students to the AI & Data Science Professional Diploma. A free Python programming course attracted 1600 applicants in two days, 250 of whom enrolled.

Mohamad Yateem enrolled in the Project Management program last fall at the recommendation of a relative. “It seemed affordable, accessible, and prestigious,” he says. Yateem put his learning to work as a new member of the Hub staff, coordinating two online programs. He “is in constant contact with our team to close loopholes and to address student concerns. I know the loopholes and can use my own mistakes and tweaks to improve the student experience for others.”

Antoun says the Hub has been most successful with first-generation students signing up for professional diploma programs. “More courses with Arabic subtitles would help us tap into the underserved community,” she says. “And we’re exploring an online English course to help people meet the proficiency requirement.”

The Hub team proudly points to five online programs, 40 partial and full-digital versions of residential courses, with 15 more residential courses in the pipeline. They’re working as fast as they can, keeping an eye on the reward of extending the boundaries of AUB and empowering Arab youth for sustainable regional development.
Shatha Hanaysha was with a group of journalists, including iconic Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, reporting on the raid within the Palestinian Jenin camp in the West Bank on May 11, 2022. “As we were about to start working, the Israeli soldiers started shooting at us,” Shatha remembers. “One of my colleagues hid, and the second one was injured, and my colleague Shireen was killed. I stood behind the tree as the shooting was still going.”

Today, Shatha is the first recipient of the Shireen Abu Akleh Endowed Memorial Scholarship at AUB, which was established through a full partnership between the American University of Beirut and the Yafa Foundation.

Shatha, who worked as a journalist for seven years and is now studying for her master’s degree in media studies, considers the scholarship to be a “rescue” for her after having suffered deeply from the tragic event in May last year. “I couldn’t stand in the streets and cover all the things that I covered before,” she explains. “I can tell you that [the scholarship] has been like a healing journey for me. To be here now, it helped me be myself, and be stronger. When I finish the scholarship and go back to Palestine and start working again, I will be stronger.”

The Shireen Abu Akleh Endowed Memorial Scholarship at AUB is a fully-funded scholarship honoring the memory of slain Palestinian-American journalist of the highest caliber Shireen Abu Akleh, who is one of the most prominent names across the Middle East and the world, for being a champion of Palestine, a symbol of hope, and an inspiration to many.

“For me, it’s an honor to receive a scholarship named after Shireen Abu Akleh,” Shatha says. “She was an idol for me when I was a little girl watching TV. She was the female journalist I dreamt to be like.” Shatha explains that this is why the May 2022 event was such a shock for her: “To see the journalist that I dream to be like being killed in front of me made me go through all the things that I went through.”

She says that when she received the scholarship, she felt connected to Shireen, which helped her go on. “When I stopped my work as a journalist, when I couldn’t continue, she came to me through the scholarship and told me to continue fulfilling my dream and doing what I love.”

“It’s amazing for me to be here at this time, as a Palestinian journalist, to be in AUB, to learn from amazing professors, to sit and study in the Jafet Library, and to see all the resources of books about journalism and media … it’s amazing,” she says. Shatha adds that studying at AUB has been a great opportunity for her and that she is inspired by “walking in the same corridors, in the same streets, sitting in the same buildings where so many great people who studied and graduated from here were before me.”
Unlikely Peers
Father & daughter graduate together

It was Mohamad Daouk who convinced his daughter, Dima, to enroll in AUB’s master’s degree in business analytics (MSBA) program. “I knew what the program could provide—and how I could apply what I learned at work,” he says. He was also sure that gaining these skills would give Dima an edge in her career. He was right. “Enrolling in this program was,” she says, “the best decision of my life. It has unlocked a part of my brain that I did not know existed.” Mohamad and Dima enjoyed the experience of being enrolled in the program at the same time. “We entered the classroom as students, not as father and daughter,” says Mohamad. Dima says that their biggest challenge in working together was that they both wanted to do everything. “We are both type A personalities,” she laughs.
Design Rooted in Heritage

Architects are often called upon to make a mark, to showcase their artistic muscle by bending and shaping the environment. But for Carl Gerges (BArch ’11), scarring the land in such a way is antithetical to his work. “My mission is to not only preserve what already exists but also to highlight it,” he says. In a time when we are asked to think about sustainability and cultural heritage, Gerges has his answer, and he is building his architectural firm around it.

Many know Gerges from one of the region’s most successful indie rock bands, Mashrou’ Leila. They may not know he started at AUB as an architecture student in the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture. “AUB changed everything for me. Spending time in the green spaces, historic buildings of the campus, sitting in the architecture classes with the old stools and drawing tables was magical,” he says. Though he would go on to an over decade-long career in music with his classmates from AUB, his background in the art of design remained a part of his DNA.

Today, Gerges is an up-and-coming designer in his field. He recently established his own architecture firm, Carl Gerges Architects, and has logged significant accomplishments in just a few years. His most recent design of the CAPO Boutique Hotel and Resort in Batroun, Lebanon, has garnered praise from various architectural magazines, and he was named one of GQ Middle East’s Men of the Year in 2022. “Architecture was one of my childhood dreams, and I’m really getting to live it right now. I’m truly grateful,” he says.

Gerges’s designs evoke Mediterranean landscapes and draw from the cultural heritage of Lebanon. He weaves botanical landscapes into his architectural work, staying true to the idea that the natural environment and architecture can work together rather than in competition. “My architecture is very contextual. Harmony with the surroundings is really important to me. From the first day of design, the landscape is taken into consideration. This is not common with all architects,” he says. In his design and building of the CAPO Boutique Hotel and Resort, this intention is clear. The natural topography is sewn into the design, exemplified by how he creates pockets of moments that bring the outdoors in.

At a time when many can only envision a bleak future for Lebanon, Gerges is designing works that challenge assumptions about what is still possible.

My mission is to not only preserve what already exists but also to highlight it.
The Power of Hope

“I am very grateful to God because I prayed for one baby, and He gave me two,” Mohammad Eid declared as his baby girls were being cared for at the NICU at AUBMC. After giving birth to conjoined twins, his wife, Mireille, is ecstatic to be reunited with Rahaf, who has been recently discharged, and is waiting for little Riham who is being transferred to another facility after months of respiratory problems.

The unfolding story of the twins shows that even amid compounding crises, AUBMC continues to give a ray of hope to the people of Lebanon. In January of this year, the medical staff made history by performing the successful separation of the twins for the first time in Lebanon. The highly complex procedure required meticulous coordination among the surgical and medical specialties, anesthesia, operating room and nursing staff, and hospital administration.

Mireille Malass and Mohammad Eid had learned of their twins’ case early in the pregnancy. It was in the second month that Mireille heard her doctor in Tripoli whispering to herself during the ultrasound as she was looking for the membrane separating the twins. With a background in nursing, Mireille was able to understand a lot of what the doctor was murmuring. She remembers, “Although the doctor told me it was too early to tell, the possibility that I might be carrying conjoined twins was stuck in my head. It was very difficult for me, and I started crying. Then, I placed my hand on my belly and entrusted them to God.”

Within the next few months, after consulting with a doctor for a second opinion, the couple learned that Riham had a tiny brain with a water sac attached to her head. They were told they could seek medical help abroad, where doctors would likely schedule an immediate delivery to protect the mother and the other baby, who would herself be incubated for some time. Mohammad refused any such action. He says of the decision, “Whatever God decided to give me, I would have accepted, even if they were lumps of meat.”

The Eid couple was faced with the challenge of delivering their babies in Tripoli and having to secure $35,000 plus additional costs when the Ministry of Public Health stepped in. They remember, “What kept us up at night was learning how much an early delivery would have cost and not being able to secure the funds. Family and friends were very generous to lend us money, which we are ever so grateful for, but it did not add up to even a quarter of the amount.”

Mireille learned that Firass Abiad, caretaker minister of health, was suggesting AUBMC for the delivery and the surgical separation of Riham and Rahaf because “it is an internationally renowned medical center with the best medical staff and state-of-the-art equipment and techniques.” She remembers, “Minister Firass Abiad did not approve my delivering anywhere but at AUBMC. It was that very second when I felt the weight of the world lift off my shoulders. I would have never imagined I would deliver at AUBMC.”

Postpartum and before the twins’ surgery, Mireille and Mohammad had to go home, leaving their girls in the NICU and visiting whenever they could. Mohammad would video call his wife from the NICU while Mireille’s cesarean incision was still healing. While it was enormously difficult to be separated from her newborn babies, Mireille could rest a bit easier knowing they were receiving the highest quality care.

In January, the twins’ surgery lasted for approximately 10 hours. The parents remained calm in spite of the situation; they had faith in God and trust in the medical center and the expertise of the doctors and were certain it would be successful. They did not mind that their girls were the center of media attention all over Lebanon and hoped their story would be an inspiration for others. They wanted their experience to plant hope in the hearts of expectant parents who might also have pregnancy and delivery complications.

After witnessing the difficult and challenging journey to recovery her babies went through, Mireille says, “I salute the doctors and nurses and would like to thank them one by one. Their goal was the success of the surgery, and they had clearly planned how to reach that goal. I would like to say I am thankful that my husband and I decided to stay in Lebanon and have this operation here because we still have the best medical staff at AUBMC, despite the multiple crises the country is going through.”
The global telethon on December 22, 2022, was, as President Fadlo Khuri noted in a message he sent to the AUB community the next day, “moving and impactful beyond our wildest expectations.” Thousands of people from around the world came together to raise more than $5 million for the Cancer Support Fund (CSF), a charitable initiative at the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute at the AUB Medical Center. “Fewer than a dozen adult cancer centers in the world could have pulled that number off. The emotional impact? In this country? It is incalculable,” said Khuri.

The outpouring of emotion on December 22 was prompted by heartrending stories from cancer patients like Shawki, who is just 19 years old and recently had an above-knee amputation. The son of a bus driver, he is one of five siblings. The family sold everything they had, including their property, to pay for the expensive treatment that Shawki needed, but it was not enough.

Fatmeh, a 39-year-old mother of four children, spoke about her experience receiving treatment for breast, colon, and lung cancer. Adnan, who needs treatment for multiple myeloma, talked about the challenges that he and his wife are facing as they struggle to take care of their three school-aged children.

Thanks to the money that was raised during the telethon, which was organized in partnership with Sar El Waqt and MTV, Dr. Ali Taher, CSF cofounder and director of the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute, and his colleagues will be able to treat even more patients. “We are offering cancer patients exceptional medical care,” said Taher. “What we lack is financial resources so we can secure the treatments we require and assist even more patients, too many of whom cannot afford the lifesaving treatment they need.”

The CSF was launched in March 2018 to assist cancer patients throughout their medical treatment journeys. The fund is led by founder and president Hala Dahdah Abou Jaber, who spearheaded the December 22 telethon to increase public awareness of cancer while providing financial assistance, emotional support, and advice to patients who need help. Since it was established, the CSF has helped more than 1,200 patients. The need continues to grow. “The number of adult cancer patients requesting support has increased dramatically,” said Dahdah, noting that 30 percent of cancer patients cannot afford to pay their hospital bills.

“The AUBMC administration and physicians are doing their utmost to care for our community, but the challenges are immense,” said Dr. Raymond Sawaya, the Raja N. Khuri Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and vice president for medical affairs. “We are deeply grateful to everyone who supported the telethon—and to our many other donors as well.”
**Check Up:**

**Beyond Braces**

Joseph G. Ghafari, DMD, Professor and Founding Chairperson at the Department of Dentofacial Medicine

**What does the Dentofacial Department at AUBMC do?**
The Dentofacial Department was originally a specialty orthodontics department basically just straightening teeth, but we’re more multifaceted now and provide care in all dental specialties. We have a general dentist, a periodontist, a pediatric dentist, and an endodontist—who performs root canals—all of whom work in our department on a part-time basis.

We deal with a lot of craniofacial anomalies. These could be as mild as crooked teeth or as severe as a cleft lip, cleft palate syndromes, or symptoms that affect the facial appearance and the function of the face and jaw. These are often treated by maxillofacial surgeons.

**What distinguishes the department from other dentistry-focused departments at peer universities?**
What is unique in the annals of medicine and dentistry, and what has significant implications, is that the department sits under the umbrella of the medical school. This is unprecedented and unique because dental medicine is universally treated as separate and apart from medicine.

But why should the mouth, a central organ responsible for speech, mastication, eating, and breathing, be considered separate? There is a historical reason: dentistry began not at the doctor’s office, but at the barber shop, where, long ago, dentistry was a matter of tooth extraction performed by a barber. To this day, in Pennsylvania, there are two professions that the state licenses through a practical exam: dentistry and hairdressing.

In fact, the AUB Dental School closed in the 1940s because there weren’t enough applicants. Why? Because the Lebanese government, in line with historical thinking around dentistry, passed a law that allowed would-be dentists to enter the profession via apprenticeship, and the Dental School administrators understood that this would lead to decreased enrollment.

**What has prevented dentistry’s reintegration into medicine?**
The integration of dentistry and medicine has become a political issue. Dental schools and their leadership, born separately into the academic universe, do not want to integrate. Why become a vassal when you’re already a king?

There is a movement supporting reintegration in the United States that has gained some traction within the Edward Engel Society of Orthodontics, of which I am a member; however, there has been no great progress on the issue. AUB, with the creation of the Dentofacial Department, is really a leader in that space.

**What are your goals and hopes for the department’s future?**
Dr. Joseph Tamari, a distinguished dentist who practiced in Lebanon and then at the University of Chicago, donated to support our growth. We have 9 dental chairs now, but soon we will have 21 chairs.

Our goal is for the various departmental staff to be working in the department full-time rather than part-time as they do now. Then we are going to offer postgraduate residencies or fellowships, either in general dentistry or a specialization. We have many great mentors and teachers students can work with. Beyond that, we’d like to have a continuing education arm.
The Struggle Against Early Marriage

Photo courtesy of Amenah Portrait Exhibit in Van Dyck Hall, 3rd floor. Inspiring portraits of Syrian refugee girls who participated in the Amenah Project.
The civil war in Syria has devastated the country and created the world’s largest refugee crisis. The consequences of this conflict have had ripple effects worldwide, but one of the unforeseen repercussions of the crisis has been the rise in early marriages among Syrian refugee girls.

A recent study by AUB’s Amenah Project found that child marriage rates among Syrian refugee girls have increased four times since the start of the conflict. In Lebanon, 24 percent of refugee girls between the ages of 15 and 17 are now married, up from 6 percent before the war. “The risk of early marriage is a product of poverty, displacement, and a patriarchal social structure,” says Dr. Sawsan Abdulrahim, principal investigator of the Amenah Project. “It’s a cycle of disadvantage where the disadvantage leads to early marriage, and early marriage leads to poverty.”

The Amenah Project is an intervention study that aims to mitigate the drivers of early marriage among Syrian refugee adolescent girls in Lebanon. It is being conducted by an interdisciplinary team of researchers in the Faculty of Health Sciences. “The idea of the Amenah Project is not only to educate girls about the consequences of early marriage but to address some of the social determinants of early marriage,” says Dr. Abdulrahim. To do so, the team teaches educational workshops in the camps and piloted 16 modules on assertive communication and decision-making, health and hygiene during puberty, gender equity and rights, and relationships and marriage.

Early intervention is critical to keeping Syrian refugee girls from early marriage and out of poverty. Creating community buy-in among the refugees is essential for success, and so these sessions are delivered by trained Syrian community workers. With the low enrollment rates of young Syrian girls in school, equipping them with knowledge becomes an essential engine for dismantling the cycle of disadvantage and poverty. Having members from the community as part of the solution in the workshops fuels the best outcomes.

The research at AUB by Dr. Abdulrahim and her team is creating a model for how effective change can be enacted on the ground through scholarship and community involvement. “Making an impact is just as important as the generation of knowledge. In fact, knowledge generation should be based on creating positive social impact,” says Dr. Abdulrahim.

The risk of early marriage is a product of poverty, displacement, and a patriarchal social structure.

- 24% of Syrian refugee girls are married.
- 50% of Syrian refugee girls are not enrolled in school.
- 19% of secondary school–age Syrian children are enrolled in school.
- 10% of 15- to 17-year-old Syrian girls are not enrolled in school due to being married.
The state of HIV today is far better than it was during the epidemic’s early decades. Death rates and new infections have significantly declined, and some researchers believe a vaccine against the virus is feasible. Unfortunately, these gains do not hold true for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, is a virus that attacks the immune system and, if left untreated, can lead to acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Recent data from the World Health Organization found that the MENA region, though burdened with the lowest rates of HIV in the world, is seeing an increase in new infections. Whereas globally, rates of new HIV infections have decreased by 32 percent between 2010 and 2021, the MENA region has seen a 33 percent increase in new infections during that same time.

While treatment is available in the MENA region, the stigma around HIV hinders many people from getting tested and seeking treatment. “According to UNAIDS, only 67 percent of people living with HIV in the MENA region are aware of their HIV status, with 50 percent of those on treatment,” says Associate Professor Nada Melhem of AUB’s Faculty of Health Sciences. These are alarming figures, given the advances in the prevention, detection, and treatment of the disease.

The Silent Rise of HIV in the Middle East
So why is HIV on the rise in the Middle East? The primary culprits are the structural barriers that key populations face. Sex workers, men who have sex with men, and intravenous drug users are most affected by the HIV epidemic. In many MENA countries, these communities are stigmatized and often criminalized, making it difficult for individuals to access prevention and treatment services. “The problem we have is the stigma that hinders easy access to prevention and treatment services, especially for key populations,” says Dr. Nesrine Rizk, physician and researcher at AUBMC.

Multifaceted public health policies are needed for a holistic approach to facing the epidemic. “Financial, legal, and political barriers lead to exclusion and heightened rates of violence, consequently hampering our ability to detect, treat, or prevent HIV from spreading,” says Professor Melhem. To better serve populations at risk of HIV, public awareness campaigns, human rights reforms, and reducing barriers to healthcare are vital in containing the virus.

The HIV epidemic in the MENA region is a reminder that viruses know no borders and are a global public health issue requiring a coordinated and comprehensive response. “COVID-19 was like wind on an already burning flame. We knew the fire of the HIV epidemic was not well controlled in our region, but as a result of the pandemic, treatment and prevention services were significantly affected in many parts of MENA,” says Dr. Rizk. The region now faces the challenge of extinguishing the flames of this growing epidemic. The time to act is now, before it burns larger and becomes even more challenging to control.
Medicus Revived

Jaafar Hadi (BS ’20) may have too much to do like all third-year medical students, but that hasn’t stopped him from mulling over life’s biggest questions.

“I am fascinated by the great Russian writers and their lasting impact on subsequent generations,” he says, “and even being overwhelmed, I ask what I can do to leave a lasting impact at AUB after I graduate.”

While at dinner in Beirut with fellow med students Majd Mzeihem and Mona Moukaddem (BS ’20), Hadi felt an idea coming into focus. “I’m not as strong and brave as Dostoevsky,” he said, noting the writer had grown up in an apartment with a free clinic, where his father treated the homeless and poor. The young Dostoevsky had talked with patients about their pain and loss to better understand the complex factors that influenced human nature.

Hadi and his companions mulled Dostoevsky’s noble quest as they walked home. “I wondered if we could just concentrate on a journal by and about the Faculty of Medicine,” he says. “I can’t reach Dostoevsky’s level in terms of writing, but maybe on the humanitarian level we can be brave, look for truth, and have an impact in our sphere.”

The group grasped the possibilities. Almost forty years after *Medicus* ended because of the war, they could read for themselves what had changed and what was astonishingly similar about the medical school experience. The interviews, essays, debates over thorny issues, and humor could live again.

“The early editors included philosophical articles and also humor to make their points,” Badr smiles at the memory. “They had advertisements, detailed scientific discoveries and innovations, and commentary on the times.” He notes that many of the editors went on to become prominent figures in medicine. “They were an enterprising type. When Feyrouz came to deliver her baby at AUB, two of the student editors managed to interview her.”

Exploring the digital issues of *Medicus*, one gets immersed in the juxtaposition of idealistic young doctors crashing into the realities of their patients’ lives, the commercial promises of the pharmaceutical companies, pressures of the outside world, and the relentless exhaustion of the work. The first issue in 1962 showcased an article on the sexual behavior of medical students next to an ad for cold tablets, followed by an abstract titled “The Role of the Nurse Today.”

Toward the end of its run, in 1982, *Medicus* published a weary med student’s lament. It began, “A daily surprise of exploding bombs with their harvest of innocent people killed or mutilated despite all ethics.”

Hadi and managing co-directors Mzeihem and Moukaddem revived *Medicus* online in March 2023. “Such an institution in the Middle East with its prestigious past,” says Hadi, “demanded this kind of platform to broadcast the singularity of this medical school and this faculty.”

The new *Medicus* team with Editor-in-Chief Jaafar Hadi and Co-directors Mona Moukaddem and Majd Mzeihem.

Check out the first issue of the new “*Medicus*”
Taghreed A. Najjar (BA English ’73)
I live in Amman, Jordan, with my husband, Shakir Shakhshir (BBA ’68). We have three daughters and three grandchildren. The publishing company that I founded in 1996, Al Salwa Publishers, has become a family business and is being run by my oldest daughter, Salwa Shakhshir Danil. I now act as a consultant and spend a lot of time writing for a range of ages. This keeps me very busy and engaged. I enjoy traveling to different countries for workshops, panel discussions, and story-reading sessions. I love swimming and walking and reading or listening to a good book.

What I most value about my AUB experience is the “can-do” attitude it instilled in me. We were young and believed that we had the power to change the world.

Nadim Zaazaa (BA Political Studies ’05)
I am the director of Startup Ecosystem (Calantic Spark) at Bayer Digital Solutions, where I run a global accelerator program for AI startups in medical imaging. I am also the founder and board member of Nucleus Ventures, which offers entrepreneurs, startups, and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seed capital and access to funding, and the former chief executive officer at UK Lebanon Tech Hub, which I established in 2014. I am currently based in New York.

What I most value about my AUB experience are the mindset and values it nurtured in me. It drives everything I do in my career and my personal life—and I see it in every friend I made at AUB and continue to connect with.
Leila Wehbe (BE Electrical and Computer Engineering ‘09)
I am an assistant professor of machine learning and neuroscience at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In my research, I study how our brain understands language. I use brain imaging tools such as fMRI to discover how different parts of the brain work together to understand the meaning of words, sentences, and paragraphs.

What I most value about my AUB experience is that I was able to take courses that satisfy a large array of interests in a wide variety of disciplines. For instance, alongside the electrical engineering curriculum, it was wonderful to dive into topics such as cognitive science, philosophy, anthropology, biology, and biomedical engineering, which have all contributed to my professional outlook and personal worldview.

Priscilla E. Sharuk (BSLEM Landscape Design and Eco-Management ‘10)
I am the cofounder and COO of MYKI Password Manager and Authenticator, which was recently acquired by JumpCloud, where I am now the cofounder and global people operations senior manager. Listed by Forbes as one of the top 10 women in tech in 2020, I am deeply involved in the international startup ecosystem and have coached over 450 startups.

What I most value about my AUB experience is how much AUB encourages creative and independent thought! My experience allowed my entrepreneurial spirit to flourish and set me on a path to succeed in my professional endeavors.

Tessa Sakhi (BArch ’15)
I cofounded T SAKHI (www.tsakhi.com) with my sister, Tara, in 2015. I live in Venice, Italy, but work and travel around the world. We are currently working on a public realm project in Dubai for the Alserkal Arts Foundation. We are also producing a coffee-table collection, Reconciled Fragments, in Lebanon using recycled decomposed and fragmented materials and working with Venetian glassblowers discovering connections and shared knowledge of glassmaking between the Venetian lagoon and across to the Mediterranean region.

What I most value about my AUB experience is the enriching students I met from diverse cultures, the wide array of curricula that gave me the choice and freedom to expand my knowledge and creativity, and the attention and passion of my professors.
Recently Elected

Health Sciences Chapter
President: Boushra Yaghi Rahal (BS Biology ’98, TD ’99, MPH ’01, EMBA ’15)
Vice President: Maysaa Chaouki Jaafar (BS Medical Laboratory Technology ’07, MPH ’09)
Treasurer: Maysaa Baroud (MS Microbiology and Immunology ’11, MPH ’15)
Secretary: Mirna Ata Bou Hamdan (BS Medical Laboratory Sciences ’13, MS Microbiology and Immunology ’15)
Members at Large: Batoul Abdulsater (BS Medical Laboratory Sciences ’19), Hala Najm (MPH ’16), Nabil Natafgi (BS Medical Laboratory Technology ’09, MPH ’11), Mona Osman (BS Biology ’88, MD ’92, MPH ’02)

North Texas–Dallas Chapter
President: Hisham Musallam (BE Civil Engineering ’90)
Vice President: Caroline Najour Moubarak (MA English Literature ’01)
Treasurer: William Bichara (BA Political Studies ’91)
Secretary: Lina Bichara (BBA ’93, MBA ’96)
Social Media Representative: Lina Bichara (BBA ’93, MBA ’96)
Members at Large: Mariam Haidar (BA English Literature ’11), Wassim Hamade (BBA ’05), Nina Al-Saghir Salhab (BS Nutrition and Dietetics ’90)

New York Metropolitan Chapter
President: Nina Lakkis Antonios (BS Biostatistics ’82, MS Epidemiology ’85)
Vice President: Tony Mansour (BBA ’06)
Treasurer: Sara Kaddoura (BS Environmental Health ’15)
Secretary: Sandra Kahlwaji (MPH ’20)
Members at Large: Yves Azzam (BS Computer Science ’10), Mohamad Ali Diab (BS Biology ’21), Lara El Dabet (BS Nutrition and Dietetics ’20), Maysaa El Zoghbi (BS Biology ’05, MD ’09), Ayah Harfouch (BA Education ’15)
Seventy-four AUB alumni medical professionals working in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and Ohio were honored by their alma mater, their colleagues, and by other AUB alumni during a tribute and fundraising gala that was hosted by the WAAAUB Houston Chapter in Texas on March 18, 2023. The event took place at the InterContinental Hotel at the Texas Medical Center, which is owned and was developed by longtime AUB supporter Monzer Hourani. President Fadlo R. Khuri, Vice President and Dean Raymond Sawaya, Senior Vice President Imad B. Baalbaki, Trustees William and Huda Zoghbi, and Dr. Stephen B. L. Penrose (whose father, Stephen B. L. Penrose Jr., was president of AUB between 1948 and 1954) were among the distinguished guests who attended “Excellence through Adversity: A Tribute to AUB Medical Professionals in Texas and Louisiana, in Support of Medical Students and the Medical Center at AUB.”

The 74 medical alumni who were honored work in research, private practice, and at renowned institutions including Houston Methodist Hospital, Baylor College of Medicine, the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, and the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB). They included Hanna J. Abu-Nassar and Jamil T. Azzam (both members of the MD Class of 1958) and 15 alumni who earned their MD degrees in 2021 and 2022. During her tribute, Lina Jazi (BS ’89), associate vice president for alumni relations in North America and general secretary of WAAAUB, AUB’s global alumni association, described the honorees as “medicine’s moral compass, who continue to excel, even through adversity.” She continued, “Your strength lies not only in your expertise but also in your values. These are the same values that define our university and its medical center, and that we, as alumni, uphold and cherish.”

One of the goals of the March 18 gala was to raise funds for priorities at the medical center and to provide support for current AUB medical students. Johnny (Bravo) Holloway led the live—and lively—fundraising appeal, which attracted 127 donations ranging from $100 to $25,000. The total raised during the appeal, including a $100,000 donation from Colonel Don Mafrige, was $269,000. More than $1.5 million was received or pledged in the days leading up to the event and at the dinner itself—“an extraordinary accomplishment for which we should all be very proud,” said Jazi.
Souhail Chamieh (BBA ’43, MBA ’46), recipient of the first MBA awarded by AUB, writes, “I began my career at the Trans Arabian Pipeline Co (Tapline) in 1944 and, after a series of advancements, was appointed Tapline’s top representative in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan with unlimited power of attorney. I taught accounting courses at AUB on a part-time basis for many years. In 1950 I was one of only seven people selected for a training program at the World Bank. I was offered a chance to work at the bank in Washington, DC, at the conclusion of the program, but decided to return to Lebanon. I am now retired and living with my wife, Eliana, in Pasadena, California. My two sons, Dimitri (who earned a PhD at Caltech and an MBA at UCLA) and Naji (who earned a PhD at UCLA), are both former AUB engineering students.”

Nadeem Zakharia (BE ’60) writes, “After graduation, I worked with international companies on large civil engineering projects throughout the Middle East. I used this experience when I worked with Fouad Maalouf to build the Modern Arab Construction Co. (MAC) in Saudi Arabia. It is amazing to see the changes that have taken place in the region in recent decades. After retiring in 2014, I was an advisor for the International College (IC) on new buildings for three years. I enjoy various hobbies and spending time with my children and grandchildren. Many thanks to AUB for my education and for instilling in me excellent leadership qualities—and for staying in touch.”

Ibrahim Houri (Huri) (BA Economics ’62) writes, “I immigrated to the US 45 years ago and am currently residing in Manhattan. I would love to meet AUBites who are visiting the ‘city that never sleeps’ anytime.”

Sabih Kukhun (BS Pharmacy ’63) writes, “I want to let my classmates know that I have ended my practice of pharmaceutical commercial activities and am now retired. My wife, Raja, and I live in Amman. Our three children are doing well: Samer, who has an MBA from Butler University in the US, lives in Amman; Lina, who earned a pharmacy degree at Butler University, lives in Toronto; and Hani, who holds a bachelor’s degree in engineering, lives in Riyadh. I still remember most of my classmates but unfortunately am not in touch with them. I look forward to hearing from them.”

Greg Mestanas (BA Psychology ’63), PhD, is currently retired and living with his family in Annapolis, Maryland, where he was in independent practice as a psychologist/behavioral health consultant for 50 years. He is a member of the American Psychological Association’s Societies of Clinical Psychology and Clinical Neuropsychology and the author of numerous articles and two books on health: Passion for Health: A Natural Way to Wellness through Nutrition, Behavior and Lifestyle (2005) and Younger at Any Age: Adopting a Culture of Wellness, which will be published in 2023 and can be obtained through Amazon.

Mary “Jan” Clement (Hageman) (Clark) (JYA 1963–64), PhD, completed a PhD degree in 1977 from Washington State University in sociology/criminal justice and taught criminal justice at Wichita State University and Virginia Commonwealth University. In 1990, she completed a dual degree in law and social work. In 1998–99, Mary was chosen as a Fulbright Scholar to teach law at Birzeit University. She retired in 1999 and went to Tennessee, where she passed the bar exam and set up a private criminal law and family law practice. She retired for a second time in summer 2022 and moved to Texas. She recently published PEACE, a book about her Fulbright Scholar adventures.

Ahmad Awdeh (BA English ’68, MA Education ’86) lives in Beirut. He recently wrote a book, O My Lord! Prayer in the Holy Book of Muslims, which he decided to write in English to reach a larger audience. It will be distributed worldwide by a UK-based publisher.
Saleem Kiblawi (BS '65, MD '69) writes, “I retired from the clinical practice of medicine in 2013. However, I continue to work as a consultant for the Joint Commission International. I live in Beirut with my wife, Balkis. She is a retired social worker and school counselor. We travel often, especially to Dubai to visit our two boys who live and work there. Shafeeek (MD '82) is an emergency medicine physician, married to Gihan El-Hage. Ramzi is in marketing working at Jotun and is married to Nadine Choufani. They have a boy (Kian, two and a half years old) and a girl (Sienna, three months old).”

John Morrell (JYA 1968–69) writes, “My experience at AUB and in Lebanon as part of the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) Junior Year Abroad Program drastically changed my life and interests. After graduating from Kenyon College in Ohio, I went to McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies, where I earned a master’s degree. I also got married and had three children. I was later ordained an Anglican priest and served in Quebec; Vermont; Doha, Qatar; Grenada; and Nova Scotia. I am now retired and living in Nova Scotia. I am now retired and enjoy being grandparents to our four grandchildren. I am now concentrating on my literary and photographic activities. My most recent book was Lines and Colours, a prose book in Arabic. I have also published books by other authors. Please check out my website: www.raghidnahhas.com.”

Raghid Nahhas (BS Biology '73, MS Marine Sciences '76), PhD (Hull University, 1981), writes, “Hello from Sydney, Australia, where I have been living for the past 35 years. My wife and I are retired and enjoy being grandparents to our four grandchildren. I am now concentrating on my literary and photographic activities. My most recent book was Lines and Colours, a prose book in Arabic. I have also published books by other authors. Please check out my website: www.raghidnahhas.com.”

1970s

Philip Davies (JYA 1969–70) was recently honored with the Muskingum University Alumni Council and Muskingum University Distinguished Service Award in recognition of his work in international humanitarian relief and development with international nonprofit organizations. Davies, who began his 40-year career working for Save the Children in Lebanon, credits AUB with nurturing his passion for the Middle East and his understanding of cultural and social change. Davies earned an MA in Near East studies and anthropology from the University of Michigan.

Sylva Hechginian Collins (BS Mathematics '71) moved to the US after graduating to attend Boston University, where she earned a PhD in mathematical statistics. She later earned a master’s degree in computer science from New York University. She has had a long career in the pharmaceutical industry and is best known for pioneering electronic data capture at several pharmaceutical companies. She was recently appointed director of the Office of Biostatistics for the US Food and Drug Administration Drug Division. Sylva met her husband, John Collins, at her first job. Together they have raised three children.

Kamal M. Rachid (BE Mechanical Engineering '72) writes, “Between 1972 and 2003, I was an engineering officer in the Lebanese Army (LAF). After resigning as a major general, I did a variety of things: becoming a member of the board of LIBNOR (2003–13), working at Al Jaber Group in Abu Dhabi (2006–11), establishing a vocational school in El Chouf and working part-time as an editor and proofreader (2003–14), and working as an employee at Sarooj Construction Company (2014–17).”

Souad Dajani (BA Sociology & Anthropology '73, MA Sociology '76) writes, “Can it really be 50 years since I graduated?! The decades have flown by all too quickly. I entered AUB as a freshman at the age of 16. In addition to my AUB degrees, I earned a PhD from the University of Toronto (1984). My life and career have taken many twists and turns. I am now retired and living in Massachusetts. I would love to connect with former classmates and/or students from my time as a TA and lecturer. I can be reached at srdajani@gmail.com”

Loutfi Echhade (BBA '73), CPA, CMA, CIA, CISA, CFE, CCSA, is a retired senior partner with EY. He currently serves as an independent member on the board and audit committees of eight joint stock companies in Saudi Arabia and is a member of the IMA Board of Regents and the Professional Standards Committee of the Texas Society of CPAs. He previously served on the EY Global, EMEA, and MENA advisory councils and as head of the WAAUAB Advisory Board Outreach Committee and was a member of the WAAUAB Business Chapter. His three children, Basil, Dena, and Leila, have all earned degrees from AUB’s Suliman S. Olayan School of Business.

Taghreed A. Najjar (BA English '73) has been writing children’s books in Arabic since she graduated from AUB. Many have been translated into other languages, including English, French, Italian, Turkish, and Greek. She has received numerous awards and recognitions, including the Etisalat Prize for Arabic Children's Literature, a nomination for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (2023), the Hans Christian Andersen Award (in 2020), and the Jordanian Award for merit for her work in children’s literature (2021). She is married to alumnus Shakir Shakhsir (1968). They have three daughters and three grandchildren and live in Amman. www.taghreednajjar.com

Joe Stephan (BE Mechanical Engineering '73) is enjoying a fully deserved retirement, primarily in Lebanon. During his 50-year career, Joe spent 30 years managing Stephan Agencies, which imports industrial equipment and printing machinery. He also spent seven years working in steel construction in Saudi Arabia.
He and his wife, Hana Zahr (BA Sociology and Anthropology ’83), have three daughters: Cynthia (BA Psychology ’05), Celine (BArch ’08), and Tatiana, who has a master’s degree in architecture from Academie Libanaise des Beaux Arts (ALBA). They enjoy spending time with their grandchildren in Montreal and Beirut.

Monica Taugher Jubaili (BA History and Geography ’73, MA Education ’77) married Maher Jubaili (BS Agriculture ’72) in 1974. They have four children. Monica taught English for many years, including at AUB, BUC Saïda, NDU, and Balamand University. She also worked at ACS with the IB program before retiring in 2003. She and Maher moved to Dubai in 2007. After he retired in 2021, they established the Cedar Gate Fund, an NGO that supports education and livelihood initiatives in Lebanon, including training job seekers and providing public schools and institutions with clean and affordable energy solutions along with access to digital resources.

Thomas Bruggman (former student 1973–74) writes, “Twill, my 17-year-old, and I recently went on a wild adventure to Africa for a month. We traveled from Cape Town, South Africa, visited both sides of the Victoria Falls, and saw Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia as well. It was a shared thrill!”

Zaki Zatari (BE Mechanical Engineering ’78) is a resident engineer with Dar on the Beirut International Airport operations and management (O&M) project and current president of the Lebanese ASHRAE Chapter, LAC. He earned a master’s degree from Cornell University in 1982 and worked in the US for 12 years before returning to Lebanon in 1994. Since then, he has been working with consulting, project management, and O&M companies in the MENA region. He is LEED AP certified with special interest in highly efficient building designs. He participated in the Beirut Marathon in 2023 and is very interested in hiking—and financial markets.

1980s

Salamah Salamah (BE Civil Engineering ’81) writes, “Although I started as an engineer, I am now a writer and living in France. My first printed book in French, of poetic romance philosophy, will be coming out soon. I hope to get it translated! I think it will be well received and enjoyed by everyone.”

Jamal Umari (BE Civil Engineering ’81) works at Khawarizmi University Technical College in Amman, Jordan, where he is involved in an IREX-sponsored initiative to engage students from Jordan with students in the US using Global Solutions Conversations.

Najat Kassir (BA Political Studies ’82) lives in Lebanon and would love to hear from friends and classmates from her time at AUB.

Elias Iskandar Traboulsi (BS Biochemistry ’77, MD ’82) was recently honored with the John C. Gienapp Award by the Accreditation Commission for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) in recognition of his dedication to graduate medical education and his “outstanding contributions to the enhancement of residency education and ACGME accreditation activities.” He is the head of the Department of Pediatric Ophthalmology and director of the Center for Genetic Eye Diseases at Cleveland Clinic’s Cole Eye Institute. He is also a professor of ophthalmology at the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine of Case Western Reserve University and director of the Ophthalmology Residency Program at Cleveland Clinic. From 2005 to 2021, he was the director of Graduate Medical Education at Cleveland Clinic.

Jalal Toufic (BA Philosophy ’84) is a professor at the American University in Cairo. He is the author of, among over ten books, What Was I Thinking? (2017) and Forthcoming (2nd ed., 2014), both published by Sternberg Press and part of the e-flux journal series. His films and artwork have been exhibited at the 6th, 10th, and 11th Sharjah Biennials; the 9th Shanghai Biennale; MoMA PS1; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Centre Pompidou; Whitechapel Gallery; MACBA; MAXXI; and Kunsthalle Fridericianum. AUB University Medal recipient Etel Adnan wrote in 2017: “Jalal Toufic is today, and has been for some time, the most original thinker on the planet.”

Hayat Kai (BS Nursing ’85) writes, “I am proud of having been a student at AUB and that my children also attended AUB. While a student at AUB, I learned how to face and manage the challenges and difficulties that one confronts in life. AUB also taught me how to assume responsibilities and be successful.”

Fadi Khouri (BA Mathematics ’87, BS Computer Science ’88) writes, “My father, Edmond Khoury, worked at AUB in the University Health Services as an administrative assistant for 42 years (1952–94). He passed away in 2011. I continued my education at the University of Sherbrooke and am now living in Montreal, where I am a mathematics professor. I miss AUB—the campus, my friends, the library, the activities, and the spirit!”

Ghassan A. Abdel Rahman (BE Electrical Engineering ’88, EMBA ’06) writes, “I have been living in Abu Dhabi since 1989 and am currently a group managing partner of Midis Site & Power Activities in the UAE. I am deeply attached to AUB: three sisters, two siblings, and three nephews are all AUBites. My son, Atef, will graduate this summer as a civil engineer. I am looking forward to his graduation! I have served as a committee member and am now vice president of the Abu Dhabi Chapter and was previously a WAAAUB Council member. I am also a member of the President’s Club.”

Ibrahim Antar (BA Public Administration ’88) writes, “My career in the management and supplies of medical equipment and medicinal drugs started after
graduation. Despite challenges due to political developments in Sierra Leone, I managed to steer my firm with great success until my appointment as honorary consul general of Pakistan in Sierra Leone in 2007. I was recently honored with a presidential award as grand officer of the Order of the Rokel for my achievements in business. I am very proud to be a product of the American University of Beirut and wish all current students every success.”

Fadia Safadi Gebran (BBA '88) has been appointed communications officer in the Office of Innovation & Transformation at AUB. She has extensive experience in communications and public relations fields, having worked at many prestigious advertising agencies, as well as in corporate communications for top-notch companies. In addition to her BBA, Fadia holds an MBA from the ESA Business School. She is married with two children and lives in Beirut.

1990s

Nagi Edmond Khoury (BA Public Administration '91) has lived in Montreal, Canada, since 1999, where he works at a marketing research company. He writes, “I miss the AUB campus!”

Samer Harb (BS Nutrition & Dietetics '95, MS Food Technology '97) writes, “I was so happy to celebrate the 25th anniversary of our graduation from AUB with my friends during Reunion 2022 on campus. I have established my own food industry consultancy company (www.internationalfoodexperts.com) and am currently working on projects in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.”

Nathalie El-Rayes (BA Economics '97) writes, “My experience at Reunion 2022 was great. It was wonderful to see old friends and VIP people like Walid Jumblatt and Nasser Saidi. I am proud to have graduated from AUB in economics. I am now working at Gold Trading all over the world. I am based in Lebanon and travel a lot. My husband and son are both American. I am the only one defending the Lebanese passport and the Lebanese people. This country can get back on its feet - I am certain about it. We just need to put the right people in the right places.”

Amer Kaisssi (BS Environmental Health '97, MPH '99) is a professor of healthcare administration at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. He is also a professional speaker, executive coach, and book author. His latest book is *Humbitious: The Power of Low-Ego & High-Drive Leadership.*

Ralph Achkar (BE Electrical Engineering '98) writes, “Coming up to 25 years! It seems like yesterday with such vivid memories. It is great to be part of this family. My professional path since graduation has included a few years in engineering and then onto finance – something I never imagined. Like most of you folks, I have moved around a bit since then. I am currently based with the family in Madrid, Spain. I hope to be in touch.”

Michel Naoufal (BS Biology '98, MA Psychology '09) writes, “After earning my degree in premed biology in 1998, I never imagined I would be where I am today: working in the mental health field. I ended up going back to AUB to earn a master’s in psychology after graduating from medical school, an unusual educational path but one that I have found to be very helpful when it comes to combining medicine and psychotherapy for the treatment of mental health disorders. The biology behind the human mind and behavior as well as the psychological mechanisms are one and the same!”

Jenny Nasr (BS Agriculture '98, MS Plant Protection '00) is a research facilitator at the University of Luxembourg in Luxembourg, where she has been living with her family since 2011. She previously worked at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome, Italy, for six years.

2000s

Raya AbdulBaki (BE Electrical Engineering '02) writes, “I call Atlanta, Georgia, home. We are incredibly blessed to have an active AUB alumni chapter here. My husband, two daughters, and I have enjoyed connecting with fellow AUBites right here in this city. When I graduated in 2002 with a bachelor’s degree in engineering, little did I imagine that my career path would take me on a side road through the world of healthcare. My background gave me the critical thinking and problem-solving skills that supported me in the different roles that I undertook. Today I am the VP of strategic outreach at a national healthcare organization.”

Charbel Lahoud (BS Agriculture '04, MS Plant Protection '06), IEMBA ’10, writes, “I am currently the CEO of Lahoud Agri Farms in Lebanon, where we grow low-impact sustainable agriculture (LISA). I am also the founder and CEO of Chaos Art Gallery in Sursock, Beirut. I wish all AUB alumni the best of luck with their projects.”

Wassim Hamade (BBA '05) writes, “I am currently a principal engineer in the analytics field with Verizon in Dallas, Texas. My main focus is leveraging technologies and data to facilitate the customer experience on all digital platforms.”

Kassem Jouini (BS Agriculture '06, MS Irrigation '09) is currently a program policy officer at the World Food Programme in Beirut. During his 17-year career, he has worked with private and international development agencies and the United Nations in a number of African and Arab countries on developing forage production, crop and soil management, irrigation scheduling, impact evaluation for agricultural projects, preparation of feasibility studies to identify crop production estimates, and the development of agricultural training materials on large farming schemes. He and his wife, Nadine Mohanna (BBA '08, MBA '14), have one son, Adam.
Lina Faysal El Kibbi (former student 2005–07), MD, is an assistant professor of rheumatology at Alfaisal University in Riyadh, where she is also the director of medical academic affairs and chairman of the IRB Committee. Lina is also the founder of the Arab Adult Arthritis Awareness Group. She has been working at the Specialized Medical Center Hospital in Riyadh since 2007.

Roy Janho (BE Civil Engineering '07, ME Engineering Management '08) writes, “Dear colleagues, I tried to write this class note using ChatGPT—I’m sure you’ve heard of it by now—but the result was disappointing, so I’ll give you the rundown myself. I am still in Dubai working as a regional commercial manager for Woods Bagot—an international architecture designer. My family has grown, as we welcomed our son, Ryan, last year. I can’t wait to take him snowboarding in Faraya, where my snowboarding journey began. In other news, inflation has hit everyone globally and its impact is felt every day. Hope you are all safe and well!”

Carla Younes (BBA '09) has been living in Lausanne, Switzerland, since 2020, where she is global communications manager for Philip Morris International (PMI), a company she has worked with for 12 years in support of its mission to achieve a smoke-free future. She and her husband are now the proud parents of a little boy, Habib.

Serena Srour (BBA ’14) writes, “Hello AUBites! I am currently heading the marketing department for the BMW Group (BMW, MINI, Rolls Royce, and BMW Motorrad) in Muscat, Oman. I previously worked with Lamborghini, Bentley, and Jaguar Beirut for six years. What I would say is that you should never aim too low or have limits to your dreams. Aim high and work hard to meet your own expectations.”

Demi Kurban (BA Media & Communications ’17) writes, “After leaving AUB, I moved to London, where I worked initially in financial journalism covering several asset classes, including infrastructure and renewable energy. I chose to shift careers in 2022 and am now a consultant focusing on advising the private capital space, including private equity firms, hedge fund managers, and private creditors, on strategic communications.”

Benita Saade (EMBA ’20) writes, “Hello AUB! I miss my class and all colleagues, mentors, and staff around the inspirational university! Thanks to my EMBA, I am now an entrepreneur working on my own startup and will be heading to new adventures between Dubai and Montreal. I send lots of love to all AUB students.”

Amira Yassine (MS Chemistry ’22) writes, “After getting my MS in chemistry under the supervision of Dr. Najat A. Saliba, I moved to the US to do a PhD at Johns Hopkins University, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering. I was selected for the prestigious Lila May Walkden Flounders Fellowship for the 2022–23 academic year shortly after I arrived based on my previous outstanding achievements, primarily at AUB. As a doctoral student in Dr. Peter DeCarlo’s lab, I am conducting research focusing on atmospheric air pollution with applications to ambient air quality and atmospheric aerosols and emissions from anthropogenic activities (especially industrial activities).”

To reach out to these and other alumni, visit the AUB Alumni Online Directory. Search for fellow AUBites and contact them through the platform. If you need assistance registering or logging in, contact the Office of Alumni Relations at alumni@aub.edu.lb.
The members of the Class of 2023 were officially welcomed to the global alumni family during the Ring Ceremony on May 30, 2023. This annual event, scheduled for around commencement, is a collaborative effort between the Office of Alumni Relations and the University Student Faculty Committee (USFC). The class ring represents the enduring connection between alumni and their alma mater.
Nasrat Fadda (BS ’45), PhD, passed away on August 5, 2022. He was born in Akka, Palestine. After graduating from AUB, he worked and studied in Jerusalem for two years until receiving a full scholarship in England. Following the occupation of Palestine, he managed to self-finance his education and completed a doctorate in biology at the Imperial College of Science in 1955. Dr. Nasrat served in various research posts in East and Central Africa for 20 years, including as chief research officer at the Kenana Research Station in Sudan and FAO project manager at the Institute of Agricultural Research in Ethiopia. Between 1975 and 1988, he worked for the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development as director of the Operations Department. In 1988, he returned to research as director general of ICARDA, a post he held until 1995. After his retirement, Dr. Nasrat was president of the Arab Development Society in Jericho, an agriculturally based welfare NGO. He spent the last few years with his wife in Neuenbürg, Germany. He will be deeply missed.

Alice Katherine Fakhry (née Shiber) (BA History ’51), born in Jerusalem, passed away peacefully on January 2, 2023. She was married for 66 years to the late Dr. Majid F. Fakhry, emeritus professor of philosophy and chair of the AUB Department of Philosophy. She is survived by her daughter, Rima; her sons, Samir and Bassem; and three grandchildren. Alice earned an AA degree from the Beirut College for Women (now LAU) and a BA in history from AUB, where she pursued master’s studies. She volunteered with the Women’s League and the Lioness Club in Lebanon, and was a long-time member of the Welcome to Washington International Club in Washington, DC. A prize-winning flower arranger, Alice was a gracious hostess and a loving wife and mother. Rima was by her side during her long period of illness. She will be remembered fondly by her family and many friends. A memorial service will be held later this year. Donations in her honor may be sent to AUB. You may contact Rima at rima.fakhry@gmail.com to send messages to the family.

In Memoriam

Our Legacy:

Innovation and hard work are behind the success of the Maki Restaurant Group, which opened its first restaurant in Kuwait in 2002. Brothers Oliver (BA Economics ’87) and Amer (BS Agricultural Engineering ’91) Zeitoun have since opened award-winning restaurants in Doha, Bahrain, and London. Oliver Maki London was listed in The Michelin Guide: Great Britain & Ireland in both 2017 and 2018. “I followed my passion,” explains Oliver, “and want to help others do the same. I also want our name to be associated with a university that helps young people realize their dreams. That is why I established the Oliver Maki Scholarships at AUB, a university I know well, as so many members of my family, including my daughter Yara (BBA ’11), are AUB alumni.”
Samir Said Najjar

Samir Said Najjar (BA General ’54, MD ’57) passed away on February 3, 2023. He was an emeritus professor of pediatrics and adolescent medicine, former dean of the Faculty of Medicine at AUB, and the first pediatric endocrinologist in the region. He was also a beloved mentor, doctor, colleague, and scholar and leaves behind an extraordinary legacy of service and scholarship. “We at AUB and at our medical center will forever be grateful for all that Dr. Najjar has done for his alma mater, where he spent the vast majority of his life, and for the extraordinary service he rendered the wider world,” said President Fadlo R. Khuri in a message he sent to the AUB community on February 6, 2023.

Dr. Najjar was born on May 17, 1932, in Beit-Meri. After graduating from AUB in 1957, he went to the US where he completed two years of residency in pediatrics (1957-59) and one year of fellowship in pediatric endocrinology (1959-60) at the University of Iowa Hospital. He also completed a two-year fellowship in pediatric endocrinology at Johns Hopkins Hospital (1964-66) and returned as a visiting professor (1970-71).

He spent 27 years (1960-87) at AUB during which time he led the Department of Pediatrics as acting chairman (1966-68) then as chairman (1968-86) and served as deputy chief of staff at AUBMC (1972-76). He was promoted to full professor in 1974. Between 1987 and 1994, Dr. Najjar was based in the US where he was associate professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and chief of the Rotch Medical Service (1986-88) and clinical director of the Division of Endocrinology (1988-94) at Children’s Hospital, Boston, where he won the Janeway Award for excellence in teaching (1990).

In 1994, he returned to his alma mater as professor of pediatrics and dean of the Faculty of Medicine and AUB Medical Center, a position he held until 2000. Throughout his career and even as he continued to assume ever greater administrative responsibilities, he was always a teacher. He was awarded Teacher of the Year at the Department of Pediatrics in 2005 and 2009. Dr. Najjar was also a widely respected scholar in his field. He was on the Advisory Expert Panel of Pediatric Endocrinology.

He is deeply missed by generations of patients and students – and by friends and family including his wife, Amal Takieddine Najjar (MA Education ’83), and his children, Rula, Samer, and Raya.
Marwan George Najjar (BA Arabic, TD ’69) passed away on February 14, 2023. He was a celebrated writer and producer who forged a unique creative path that transcended the worlds of Lebanese drama, marketing and advertising, television, and journalism. He is especially well known for several television series that he developed that captured the experience of growing up in Lebanon, including Diala, Al Estaz Mandour, Lamhit Hob, Bent El Hay, Min Ahla Byout Ras Beirut, Fares Eben Em Fares, Talbeen El Ereb, and Meryena. Najjar also wrote and produced numerous plays, including Le3b El Far, Jarisen Medri Men Wein, Zamte Najibe, and Kermeel.

Richard K. Khuri (former student 1973–76) passed away on November 5, 2021, at the age of 66. Forced by the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War to finish his studies at UC Berkeley (UCB), Richard obtained BS (1977) and master’s (1978) degrees in civil engineering and a PhD (1986) in philosophy from UCB. Since his early days at IC, Richard was recognized as a brilliant mind, and he was a true polymath throughout his life. He taught at several institutions in the US and published extensively in philosophical journals before he returned to Lebanon in 2004 and taught philosophy at the Lebanese American University until 2013, when his ill health prevented him from continuing his academic career. In addition to his accomplishments in philosophy, Richard was a talented musician in both classical and contemporary styles. In the last year of his life, he recorded a biographical rock album with his lifelong friend and musical partner, Kamal Badr (MD ’80), aptly entitled After A While.

Nabil Bukhalid (BEN ’81, EMBA ’05) passed away on January 3, 2023. News of his sudden and unexpected death at the age of 65 shocked his many friends and colleagues. Nabil was a kind and gentle man. He was also a visionary who made a pivotal contribution to the development of the internet in Lebanon by establishing the Lebanese Domain Registry (LBDR) and serving as administrator and registrar for the .lb ccTLD since its creation in 1993. Nabil was also the founder of the Lebanese Academic and Research Network (1994) and BeirutIX, the first Internet Exchange Point in Lebanon; cofounder of the Lebanese Internet Exchange Point (2007) and the Lebanese Broadband Manifesto Support Group (2008); cofounder and former president of the Internet Society Lebanon Chapter; cofounder and CEO of the Lebanese Internet Center; advisory board member of the Lebanese Canadian Tech Hub (2016); and mentor at Confideo Venture Mentoring (2017). He was inducted into the Internet Hall of Fame in 2017. Nabil made an invaluable contribution to his alma mater, where he worked for more than 40 years serving as director of Computing and Networking Services from 2000 until 2011. His loss is mourned by his wife, Joumana Salibi; his children, Layla, Zeina, and Sami; his sister, Raghiba, and his brother, Nadim; and family and friends at AUB, in Lebanon, and around the world.
Alumni

James Karam Mish`alani (BA '56) died in Bellingham, Washington on March 29, 2023. He was born on March 23, 1934, to Alice and Karam in Beirut, Lebanon. Appreciated for his reflectiveness, humility, and sense of humor, Jim was a broad thinker who explored spiritual traditions, art, theater, and advanced human and animal rights. Following his studies in philosophy at AUB, he received his MA ('56) and PhD ('61) degrees in philosophy from Brown University. After teaching at Brown and AUB, he joined University of Washington (Seattle) in 1963 where he stimulated the growth of philosophy students until retirement in 1999. Jim was predeceased by his brothers Richard (BSCE '52) and Gilbert (BME '55). He is survived by his wife of over 50 years Susan, their son Hisham and his wife Lindsey, his former wife Samiha (BA '56), their son Karam and his wife Krys, and his grandchildren Jackson and Rosie.

Amal Sadaka Fekrat (BBA '60) passed away on July 1, 2022, after a 10-year battle with Alzheimer’s. Amal was born in El-Monsif, Lebanon, and immigrated to the United States in 1962 with her husband, Michael Fekrat (BBA ’61, MBA ’62). She had a thriving 20-year career in real estate in Washington, DC, raised a loving, successful family, and traveled the world. She was known by her nickname, Miss Smile, for her contagious, loving smile.

Ziad Salaheddin Yamout (BE Civil Engineering ’62) passed away on February 6, 2023. A respected and much-loved member of the AUB family, Ziad is especially well remembered at his alma mater as the director of Physical Plant, a position he held from 1991 until he retired in 2003. He was very active in the University for Seniors (UfS), AUB’s adult education program; as a member of its inaugural curriculum committee; as a student; and as a teacher. He taught popular UfS classes in a variety of subjects, including bridge, personal budgeting, and AUB history. His passing is mourned by his wife, Bushra Bdeir (BA Psychology ’64, MA Psychology ’66), and his children, Sani (BS Biology ’94, MD ’98), Sawsan (BS Biology ’97), Karim (BA Psychology ’00), and Salah (MBA ’97).

Usama Abdul Wadoud Mugharbil (BS Pharmacy ’63, MS Biochemistry ’65), PhD, passed away on December 4, 2022, from aspiration pneumonia, a complication of Alzheimer’s, which he suffered from since 2013. A professor of biochemistry at the Lebanese University and the Beirut Arab University and head of the Berbir Medical Center and Dar al Ajaza al Islamia laboratories, Usama was also a WHO expert in Aleppo, Syria; director of clinical laboratories at Lebanese government hospitals; and secretary general of the Lebanese Association for the Advancement of Science. He led the 1995 and 1997 LAAS International Conferences on Computer Simulation at AUB. Usama was the beloved husband of Elizabeth Mugharbil; the loving father of Raghda Al Zein (Ahmad Al Zein) and Martin Mugharbil (Celia Faiad); the fond grandfather of Leila Al Zein, Yasmine Olivia Al Zein, Ryan Mugharbil, Leonard Mugharbil, and Zakaria Al Zein; and the loving brother of Isdihar Nsouli, Zouheir Mougharbel, Samira Mougharbel, Samia Mansour, Siham Berjawi (predeceased), and Nahida Mougharbel. You may contact Elizabeth at emugharbil@gmail.com to send messages to the family.
Alumni

Habib Debs (BE Civil Engineering '81) passed away on February 10, 2023. He was born in Beirut on December 19, 1958. After graduating from AUB, he earned a degree in architecture (ALBA ’84) and a master’s in urban planning at l’Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées in Paris (in 1986). He founded Habib Debs Architectes Urbanistes (URBI) in 1991, which developed architectural, planning, and design projects. An architect, teacher, and activist, Habib fought tirelessly—and inspired many others to do the same—to preserve and reimagine public spaces throughout Lebanon. His name will forever be associated with transformative initiatives in Lebanon and the region including Plan Vert, Liaison Duce, and Fouad Boutros Park. Colleagues at AUB remember him as a fierce fighter for heritage buildings, Beirut’s best citizen and chief designer, one of Lebanon’s most genuine and visionary urbanists, and a brilliant, brilliant human being. He will also be remembered fondly by students at AUB, ALBA, and Lebanese University, where he taught for many years. Habib loved the mountains of Lebanon, was passionate about classical music and the arts, and adored his family, including his wife, Isabelle, and his children, Maya and Sari. There is a wonderful remembrance and photos of Habib Debs on the website of the Beirut Urban Lab.

Andreas Alexandrou (BS Mechanical Engineering '82) passed away on May 31, 2018. He was born in Episkopi, Cyprus, on June 21, 1957. Andreas attended AUB, where he met his future wife, Lisa Majaj, on a USAID/Fulbright scholarship. After graduating from AUB, Andreas and Lisa traveled to the US, where he earned MS degrees in mechanical engineering (1983) and civil engineering (1985) and a PhD in mechanical engineering (in 1986) at the University of Michigan. The first professor of engineering hired at the University of Cyprus, Andreas was chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering and dean of the School of Engineering until he was diagnosed with cancer in 2007. Despite his diagnosis, he continued to work until six weeks before his death. He authored many publications, including Principles of Fluid Mechanics, an undergraduate textbook in fluid mechanics. He is deeply missed by his wife, Lisa, and his children, Nadia and Nicolas.

Richard Saumarez Smith, who died on January 18, 2023, taught for many years in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies (SOAM) and the Civilization Studies Program. He joined the department in 1993, when his wife, Martha Mundy, was recruited as a professor. She left for a post at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), but Richard remained, devoting himself to swimming and teaching. He trained as an anthropologist at King’s College, Cambridge, where he was influenced by a trip to the Amazon jungle and by the teachings of Edmund Leach. In 1969, he went to Delhi University, where he did an MLitt under the Indian sociologist and philosophical anthropologist J. P. S. Uberoi. He then embarked on a massively ambitious PhD based on the records of land tenure held by the land records office in Ludhiana: a comparative study of the difference between local styles of land record and those imposed by the British Empire. He published his work with Oxford University Press as Rule by Records: Land Registration and Village Custom in Early British Panjab (1996). Thereafter, he worked on projects with his wife, Martha Mundy, including jointly publishing their book Governing Property: Law, Administration and Production in Ottoman Syria (2007). He was described after his death by Philip Proudfoot, a fellow anthropologist, as “a kind soul and fierce intellect, as generous with Arak as his time.”

Friends

Richard Saumarez Smith
Still the same anxiety. Who hasn’t experienced it? One can bet all AUB students have been initiated in that cavernous chamber. Some thirty years ago, I waited many times on its stairs, heart racing, sweating, gazing at other students’ faces half-asleep from last night’s long hours, pleading for its gates to open and reveal the mysteries, puzzles, and riddles that awaited us inside.

Yes, it is the ominous and spacious Nicely 500—the master of all halls at AUB, the name that sends shivers down our backs, partially due to the air conditioning system. The room of triumph and tears, of hopes and despair.

One room to rule them all
One room to find them
One room to bring them all
And its magic bind them

I don’t know who built it or what was the initial usage for it, yet I bow humbly to the ingenious idea to make such a spacious hall where students can socialize on its stairs. And after socializing, proceed through the gates to indoctrination, from juveniles to warriors, roaring out, “It was an easy exam,” or “It was the hardest of my life!”

I took the prehistoric EEE and SQ tests in it, before many of you students were born or probably your parents met. And its gates spewed me out with the verdict, “You shall be an AUB student.”

Now, I’m standing here in different shoes. I’m one of the gatekeepers who throws the spell on you to summon you at 8 am. I’m the genie who prepares the riddles and puzzles, the one whom you try to question whenever I pass near you. I know some of you curse me in your hearts when you can’t solve the riddles. I’m the one who looks at your faces and remembers my own, listens to your excuses to go to the toilet, and whispers to myself, “Oh, why weren’t we that creative?”

Yet I must tell you a secret: its spell is on us all, none is spared its magic. You pass its gates to another world. That’s how it was, and that’s how it will always be.

Long live Nicely 500!

By Dr. Fadl Bdeir (BE ‘91, ME ‘96)
Part-time lecturer in industrial engineering, Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture

Nicely Hall was dedicated on April 26, 1965, and since then has been one of AUB’s flagship teaching buildings. Nicely 500 was fully revamped in 2019 and named in honor of long-standing supporter of AUB, Dr. Samer Kamil Al-Rayyes (BS ’81, MD ’85).
The Big Games
Then & Now