

Boldly AUB Campaign Launch in North America

March 16, 2017

Speech by AUB President Fadlo R. Khuri

I'm going to stray from the script, which seems to be a regular occurrence. But I want to start, your excellencies, your majesty, distinguished guests, members of our esteemed board of trustees, my uncle, my first baby sitter, my surrogate uncle, basically, family, by thanking you for coming here tonight in an interesting week for New York and for America, where we are deciding as a nation and a community what it is that really matters.

I'm going to riff off Philip's more than generous introduction to basically talk to you about what really matters in our view. To do that, I'm going to quote one of the three honorary campaign co-chairs. I'd like to recognize Dick and Barbara Debs and Farouk Jabre. Thank you very much. What really matters. Almost exactly 21 years ago, my father passed away. I got calls from many of the people I had grown to admire, including Dick Debs. When Edward Said called and told me that you really become a man once you assume the responsibility of your father, it seemed, fairly daunting, to put in mildly. Then we were told it was time to pay it forward, to pay tribute and to make a difference at AUB. And I got a lecture from Dick Debs about the things that really matter. The things that really matter, he said, always hurt. The things that really matter are the things that make you stay up at night and wonder if you can do them. But then you do them because they matter.

We're at a crossroad as a nation and a world. Dutch elections were very interesting yesterday. Who knows what will happen in France and Germany, but what we're talking about is what are the key takeaways, what are the key values that we cherish, what's the last thing that gets cut, when you don't have time or resources. I know that last thing that I think should get cut, and that is education and opportunity.

There is nothing on earth that can compare in power to education. People talk about hard power. I believe education is hard power. I think research is hard power. If you look, through the ages, Aristotle called education "an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity". And Benjamin Franklin, who's going to have yet another college named after him at one of my alma maters, called it "the investment which pays the best interest." And Nelson Mandela, arguably as admirable a leader as we saw in the 20th century, called it the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. That's actually my favorite saying. Even as a physician, a pacifist, I believe education is the best weapon to change the world. And those of you who have visited AUB, know how effective a weapon for peace, for prosperity, for opportunity, AUB is.

It's not just that it is a beautiful and magnificent campus right on the Mediterranean coast; it is the difference-maker. Ever since AUB was founded 151 years ago by the great Daniel Bliss, a missionary leader who veered in a completely different direction, when he found the only people that his family, the ancestors of Peter Dorman, could convert, were my ancestors. They were not good at converting anyone who wasn't a Khuri or a Makdisi. So that was kind of a problem. Thus was born in the 1880s the greatest power for secular humanism in the Middle East and North Africa.

The latest ratings of our students by employers indicate that we are the only institution that, if you go as far south as South Africa, as far north as Russia, as far east as India, as far west as Greece, where employers always rank our students among the top 100 colleges. AUB is what it always has been, a visa for a better opportunity. Is that enough? Is that enough for it to be a visa, or a better opportunity, a ticket out of Lebanon and the Middle East? I believe the answer to that question is no. I think we have to start looking at AUB as the institution that helps some to leave and anchors some to stay and to change the Middle East.

Philip Khoury is very generous, and he made the point that I didn't want the job when first offered. I had probably the worst first interview in existence and when I got back and told my wife. She said wow, you certainly made sure that they won't invite you back. But I think that, speaking from the heart, I'm elated. This is not a sacrifice. I have never had a moment's regret since I was first asked to take this position. Because I knew that already some wonderful people had moved back to Lebanon. Mo Sayegh had, seven years before me. Mohamed Harajli, our new provost officially as of tomorrow, Mohamed can you please stand. He had done it 30 years before me and he stayed through the war. And more recently, Steve Harvey and Ramin Sedehi, and a slew of stars have come back to join us.

What's the highlight? The highlight of my daily existence is the students, even as they're holding up placards saying that I'm trying to eliminate education for the poor, or that I'm the anti-Christ personified as the iron fist of the board. They're creative. Because these students become people like the wearable tech pioneer Hind Hobeika, the founder of instabeat, or the games product manager, Khalid Abdurahman of Pokemon Go fame, or street artist Yazan Helwani, or they become Abdulsalam Haykal, our trustee and one of the great intellectual magnates in the Arab media, who is a leader of today's Syrian diaspora. That's who the AUB students are. Or they become a young graduate from less than two years ago named Youssef Jamil Mourad, whose full funding was from the USAID program, one of those afore mentioned soft power instruments. This individual comes from a family where they own a restaurant in Becharri, a town where other than the cedars and the beautiful view, the economy is dependent on restaurants and woodcarvings. And not being willing to be just an employee, he

did something that my uncle did and started his own business building environmentally-sustainable buildings.

We look at generation after generation from the great scientists like Huda Zoghbi, who is AUB's strongest bet for a Nobel Prize, since she's won everything else, or one of the world's greatest fashion designers, Reem Acra, who had her very first fashion show at AUB, and the first in the Middle East. The point is that our faculty, who looked into the truth of the targeting of healthcare workers in Syria, our faculty members are a strange and forbidden fruit that flourishes in adversity, and so are our students.

I'm delighted in our campaign, Boldly AUB. I wanted our target to be a \$1 billion. But after spending some time with an expensive psychiatrist or psychologist that Alex and Philip had found, we settled on \$650 million. We believe the most important thing we can do in our lifetime is to build a center to select and develop leaders at the most important university in the Arab world. AUB is more influential in the Arab world than Harvard and MIT are in Massachusetts. That doesn't mean we have their budget. But we have a resonance throughout the Arab world that is extraordinary, influencing policy, healthcare, medicine, the humanities, you name it. That is a tremendous and awesome responsibility. If you look at our medical center, which helped us keep Lebanon whole and sane during the war because it treated everyone the same, from the fighters to the most unfortunate, to the most fortunate. It has defined our egalitarian approach for 150 years.

On the wall of our Main Gate it says, "That they may have life and have it more abundantly." But who is they? I would argue that they are the Arab world, which deserves the opportunity to cultivate civil societies, to retain scholars, leaders, that can get Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, where they need to be. Nine former Jordanian prime ministers, founding leaders of Yemen and of Sudan, four Lebanese prime ministers, an endless supply of intellectual leaders. Now is the time to invest because in AUB's leadership role, because the need has never been more acute.

For many years, I looked as a younger man at Lebanon, my ancestral country, with the disappointment of one surveying a failed experiment. Why had Lebanon accelerated from zero to sixty, gone from a carefully protected, burgeoning democracy to a democracy that crashed and burned under the pressures of the region? Now, with the benefit of some maturity, I see a progressive realism, a country that has hosted AUB for 151 years, that in spite of the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria, has shown resilience, and has shown the ability to keep the alive its model of citizenship and collegiality. And people are having an honest dialogue on how to move this nation forward. That is the remarkable legacy of AUB, of a university where Arab

nationalism, Syrian socialism, communism, and Lebanese nationalism, all percolated on the same campus without people taking up arms.

I don't discount how hard this will be. No university in the Middle East has ever tried to raise this kind of money and we know a lot of it will arrive through the help of our friends in North America. If you think the economy is challenging here, I can tell you that the economies in the Arab world are extraordinarily difficult now. Lebanon remains incredibly dependent on tourism and banking.

Anything that matters has to be hard. One of our greatest alumni, Zaha Hadid, who studied mathematics and passed away recently, tragically, once said, "If you want an easy life, don't be an architect." We believe that we are in an era of constructive, progressive realism. This campaign and our vision that underpins it are not a pipe dream.

Our greatest gift, and the largest one so far, was finalized a couple of months ago, and today got the blessing of the executive committee of the Board. Tomorrow, the board of trustees will vote to rename the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, the most distinguished in the Arab world, the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture. Maroun Semaan came from a humble village in the south, the second youngest of multiple siblings, got a Gulbenkian Foundation scholarship, then a full scholarship from AUB, after graduating at the top of his high school class, Maroun attended a high school that was founded in Marjayoun, our ancestral town, by my great grandfather. After he graduated from AUB, he worked in oil and gas and infrastructure. And in 1991, he met his key partner, our trustee, Mr. Ayman Asfari, and the two of them developed Petrofac into the powerhouse that it is today. So Maroun in 2011 established the Semaan Foundation, in order to provide philanthropic support in the fields of education, hospitalization and social welfare. This was never intended to be charity. This was intended for social and societal transformation. And when we sat down with Maroun, Michael Collins, and then Philip Khoury and I, what we envisioned was a faculty of engineering and architecture composed of leaders and difference makers, of people who can look at alternative sources of energy, who can look at society solutions, and Maroun, who is currently the chairman of Bluestone Management Limited, was thrilled, and he said: "I want to do this."

In 2011, Maroun established a charitable foundation that wanted to make a difference. And this is by far the biggest gift that the Semaan Foundation has given or that we have received, and he's holding our feet to the fire. That's ok. I'm proud to say that as of today, that including this gift and the one from Dar Al Handasah, we have exceeded in pledges and gifts \$360 million of our target. Next, I'm going to thank some of the largest donors. There have been many. But I

don't want you to relax because many of you in this room will be leadership donors well before this is done.

The Semaan Foundation, which I've spoken about.

The Levant Foundation, headed by Jamal Daniel who issued what he told me recently was a challenge grant, a gift of \$32 million that's helping to transform our ambulatory care center.

The Dar Group, I'll talk about them in a minute.

The Elmer and Mamdouha El Sayed Bobst Foundation

Trustee Farouk Jabre

Trustee Mu'taz Sawwaf

The Kamel Abdulrahman education fund trust, which allows us to teach some of the most underprivileged brilliant kids from the Palestinian refugee camps from Palestine.

Dr. Samir Salibi

The Bassatne Family, B & B Energy, which named our first department in engineering

Pillar Partners, who've given us our personalized medicine center.

The Mufid Farah Foundation

Trustee, Said Samih Darwazah

The Bizri family, Ahmed and Jamila Bizri's children

Trustee Munib Al Masri

The Dar Al Wafa Foundation

The Asfari Foundation, leading in this and in many other things

The Alumni Chapter of Dubai and Northern Emirates, the WAAAUB chapter

Trustee Philippe Jabre

Trustee Hisham Jaroudi

Mr. Nemeah Tohme, for the multiple sclerosis center.

So ladies and gentlemen, AUB's extraordinary past and its dynamic present mean that future success is always going to be our chance for the recovery and re-emergence of this region.

We're investing in the equivalent of a renovation and rejuvenation of intellectual thought in the Arab world. Again, we've got to have skin in the game. It has to hurt. We thank you not for the wonderful gifts you have already given but for everything you're going to do for AUB in the future.

Before I declare our campaign is officially launched in North America, I want to announce the second largest gift in our history, from the internationally acclaimed Dar Group. It is a gift driven by our beloved trustee Talal Al Shair, the son of the first capital campaign's leader and Dar founder, Kamal Al Shair. Talal, who is listening somewhere, all of you who know him know how much he loves this university, which is as close to his heart as anywhere he himself has

studied. And he is and has always been his own man, but as the son of a great AUB champion and himself a great AUB champion, I can feel certain that Kamal Al Shair would be extraordinarily proud of this gift that I'm going to talk about.

The Dar Group is renowned all over the world for their engineering and architectural expertise, and for their academic expertise in helping to redesign academic campuses through Perkins & Will, and through their other branches. In September of 2015, at my very first board meeting as president, I sought to referee a clash of the titans as to whose building should go up first, among some of our most generous donors. And Talal solved that Gordian knot by saying, "Well we gave our gift first, but our building can go last. But on one condition." Any time someone says that I start to sweat. He said: "You can go and do what you want with the first and second buildings, but I want you to promise to undertake a complete master planning of the campus, because this is a beautiful campus. It is an international resource, and maybe you should quit doing pet projects for all of us." That sounded like something I could live with.

Talal had already enabled us to design our new medical campus. He has now engaged through Dar an academic and strategic plan and campus master plan that will go hand in hand with an enrollment management plan and with our vision for a health sciences campus, as well as expanding but maintaining our wonderful campus. So every time I go home and I'm criticized because my infinitely better half believes I'm about to tear down a historic building, I know that we have one of the finest architecture consortia telling us that we're going to work to preserve the beautiful campus—among the top 25 in the world in every survey I've seen—and we're only going to be replacing old and non-historic buildings with new, more efficient buildings. We're committed to making AUB a permanent botanic garden and green space, because Beirut needs it. So in recognition of this extraordinary gift, the COO, Mr. Sedehi, the provost, Dr. Harajli, the EVP, the deans and I have been working to come up with a more holistic vision for the campus as a whole for the next 50 years. In recognition of this extraordinary gift, we've agreed to name the Children's Pavilion in the new medical center as the Dar Al Handasah Children's Pavilion and a top of the line engineering laboratory, cutting-edge in the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering, after Dar.

AUB and Dar have a long history together. Kamal Al Shair and the Dar Group have been extraordinary benefactors, and the legacy continues today. This is a family that has been committed to helping us in all aspects: scholarship programs, research, student fellowships, financial aid, medicine, patient care, and university capital projects and infrastructure. This is just the current and latest great gift from Dar and Talal. We'll be back for more in a few years. But the legacy of Kamal Al Shair continues to shine. This is a man who loved the campus, who

instilled that love in his son. Unable to attend AUB, Talal moved to the US, to the Ivies during the war, but he never lost his passion for the institution and joined the board in 2010.

With the unwavering support we receive from our close partners, I'd like to take a quick break to show a message from Talal Al Shair to all of you tonight. Can we please start the video.

[Message from Talal Al Shair]

So I was challenged by the board chair to speak briefly about our vision for the university. So our vision for the university is nothing less than restoring AUB to the rank of world-class universities. That vision has started to coalesce with the restoration of tenure, which is not just a major academic decision, but a vital competitiveness decision, by the recruitment of the best and the brightest, empowering them to do world class research, and by working to establish a future whereby by 2030, more than half of our students will be able to come to AUB without worrying about the cost of tuition. That is our vision for AUB. You may ask us why we're embarking on this vision, building on the good work of the last two administrations, that built academic quality and enhanced financial aid.

I want to go back to the words of AUB's second president Howard Bliss, which I'm going to paraphrase, whose legacy has been underrated in my view, but then I am not a historian. Howard Bliss stated that AUB is not in the business of men into doctors, men into pharmacists, men into engineers, men into businessmen. But it was in the business of making doctors into men, lawyers into men, engineers into men, and businessmen into men. So despite the gender faux pas, since this is the first university in the Middle East, in the entire Arab world, that admitted women, some forty to fifty years before the Ivies opened their doors to women. I would say that our vision is that we are in the business of taking young individuals, whether they are engineering students, agriculturalists, medical students, humanists, or in any other specialty, and making them into the men and women that can build Lebanon and the Arab world. It's not a complicated vision.

To do that, we have to help them to grow up in front of us, to take risks, and to move the chains so that tomorrow is meaningfully better than today. We are blessed with a spectacular board of trustees that truly believe they have skin in the game. And their skin is going to increase in the next five years and beyond. Consider this the start of a five-year campaign that's part of a fifty year vision. I want to belabor your patience to look next at the campaign launch video, the Boldly AUB video, then I'll get to some closing remarks.

So last year, I moved back to Beirut for the first time in thirty-three years to live. I visited Lebanon frequently. Thanks to my wife, I went at least once a year, and when Mo piled on, three times a year. I noticed on arrival that the challenges in the economy, the cost of our tuition, despite the excellence of our education, were becoming quite, difficult for the citizens of Lebanon and the Arab world. The optimism of the 1990s, the early 2000's, faded somewhat, and what remained was a tremendous economic challenge.

At the same time, I was informed by the board that you have to make sure you have enduring celebrations for your sesquicentennial, your 150th year. We asked our team, Imad Baalbaki, Soha Hmeidan, and others, to raise funds for our celebrations, including this video and the last one, so that we would not use a single tuition or patient care dollar for any of our celebrations last year or for the initial launch. Everything you are seeing has been done with the support of our strategic partners. Many of you are here, and in a very symbolic gesture, I asked for the closing gift from our strategic partners to come from our beloved board co-chair, Hutham Olayan, who has overseen every little stumble we've made. And she's busy. So thank you, Hutham. Hutham is getting the benefits of tenure without applying because she's taking a short sabbatical from the Board. So thank you, Hutham, but see you back soon. But part of that celebration was the way to show you AUB without words. And before I declare the capital campaign officially open, we wanted to show you this fantastic three-dimensional video of a university that is unlike anything you've ever seen. And John and Mary (Brock), I think Georgia Tech would be proud of the quality of this video. Let it rip. Please.

[Campaign launch video]

[An audience member speaks of his disappointment with the Lebanese political leadership]

So I genuinely believe that what happened during the war is AUB played a tremendous moderating role in Lebanon, and that's a large reason why the atrocities in the Lebanese war were dwarfed by subsequent wars in Syria, in Iraq, and elsewhere. The University had a resonance that extended beyond Ras Beirut or Ain El Mreisseh, in that it showed people could live together. But part of AUB keeping itself safe is that it withdrew from political influence outside its walls, until recent generations with more and more of our faculty and leaders having gone on to serve in government. I know many of those individuals. I think they are actually quite collegial and professional. They achieved what they did without a curriculum in Lebanon, or at AUB, that emphasizes civic engagement, civil society, and citizenship, and shared values, and comfort with the other. And those are things that the great universities do, and increasingly in this era, not just in Lebanon, but I would argue, anywhere in the world, we have to do it confidently, proudly, and shamelessly, and that's what we propose to do. So that tomorrow's

leaders are not afraid of their counterparts, and that they're very good at the difficult art of making an ethical, win-win deal for all, a better society for all. So I truly believe that we are doing it. Young people enter our campus from every different political persuasion. And even if we don't change their persuasion, which is not our goal, they leave without the fear of the other that they came in with. That rather is our goal.

I want to end by saying with the boundless faith in this institution, and this magnificent opportunity to serve, that is not a sacrifice, that is rather a privilege and an honor, to serve AUB. On behalf of our leadership team and our board, and myself, and with great concrete progressive realism, that some may call optimism for the future, an optimism that is evidence based, as a scientist, I want to thank you for your commitment of support. I now want to officially declare that Boldly AUB, the campaign to lead, innovate, and serve, is formally open in the United States and North America. Thank you very much. Please enjoy your evening.