

# The MainGate



2024 Issue No. 2

## Excellence in Motion







WHERE  
FREE MINDS  
FLOURISH



# Views from Campus



As another academic year has drawn to a close and we bade farewell to the stellar class of 2024 at our 155th commencement ceremonies, I reminded our graduates of a powerful yet often overlooked lesson: to learn from and embrace failure. From ancient Greece to our present day, failure has been viewed not as a defeat but as a critical tool for our own self-improvement. Take the extraordinary tale of Homer's *Iliad*, which immortalizes Achilles' wrath and the tragic confrontation between him and Agamemnon. Though steeped in themes of loss and suffering, this tale imparts a truly invaluable lesson about the perils of hubris, of not learning from our past errors.

Similarly, the ongoing Nakba serves as a poignant reminder of the failures of nation-states and the international community in securing justice and peace for the Palestinian people. Yet, in the seeds of such failures, we can glean the well-disguised kernels that will one day sprout, lighting the path toward equitable progress. We have witnessed a fierce determination ignited in young people globally to advocate for change and justice for Palestinians; they refuse to let this profound injustice endure for future generations.

At AUB, we embrace the spirit of learning from failure. Our campus stands as a testament to the power of resilience and the unwavering pursuit of knowledge, recognizing that failures are not roadblocks but are instead stepping stones toward growth. This ethos is mirrored in our response to crises, whether local or global. We, at AUB, endure; we adapt; and we emerge stronger than we were before.

As I implored the class of 2024, and as is relevant for all people no matter where they are in their life's journey: Go forth and fail mightily, not reluctantly or shamefully. Fail with all your spirit, and learn from those failures that your successes will one day carry your communities, societies, and nations forward to better, more sustainable, and inclusive futures. Our community is fortified by the lessons of failure, which propel us toward a future brimming with promise and hope.

For current news summaries, read our e-newsletters:

**President's Perspective**  
[www.aub.edu.lb/President/Presidentsperspective](http://www.aub.edu.lb/President/Presidentsperspective)

**AUB@Work**  
[www.aub.edu.lb/communications/aub@work](http://www.aub.edu.lb/communications/aub@work)



Please recycle this magazine.

If you prefer to subscribe to the online version of the *MainGate*, please email [maingate@aub.edu.lb](mailto:maingate@aub.edu.lb)

AUB is committed to the principle of equal opportunity and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, national or ethnic identity, sex, gender or gender identity, marital status, disability, genetic predisposition or carrier status, alienage or citizenship status, political affiliation, or any legally protected characteristic, in its programs and activities to the fullest extent permitted by Lebanese law. This includes prohibition against sexual harassment and sexual violence as mandated by Title IX of the U.S. Education Amendments of 1972. Inquiries or complaints may be addressed to the Title IX Coordinator at [integrityofficer@aub.edu.lb](mailto:integrityofficer@aub.edu.lb), the Dean of Student Affairs at [sao@aub.edu.lb](mailto:sao@aub.edu.lb), or the Office of the President, College Hall, Beirut, Lebanon, +961-1-350000. For AUB's full policies, visit [www.aub.edu.lb/titleix](http://www.aub.edu.lb/titleix).



**Cover**  
 The first two President's Athletic Scholars: Aziza Sbaity and Charbel Farah.



**Back Cover**  
 AUB4Beirut Run save the date

**Executive Editor**  
 Jennifer Muller

**Associate Editor**  
 Najib Chowdhury

**Managing Editor**  
 Sally K. Najjar

**Alumni Editor**  
 Susanne Lane

**Design Coordinator**  
 Oumama El-Chab

**Features Coordinator**  
 Leen Baassiri

**Copyeditor**  
 Adriana Smith

**Staff Writers**  
 Rana Ahmad  
 Eric Eyges

**Contributing Writers**  
 Alison Freeland  
 Hussein Hammoud  
 Ghina Ramadan

**Art Direction and Design**  
 AUB Communications  
 Carla Korkmaz, dir. creative services  
 Amal Sabsabi, graphic designer  
 Sarah Alameddine, sr. graphic designer

**Original Design**  
 Communications Design, SAL

**Photography**  
 Hasan Nisir  
 Jean Pierre Tarabay

**Printing**  
 Lane Press, USA  
 Dabbous Printing Press, Lebanon

**American University of Beirut**  
**Office of Communications**  
 PO Box 11-0236  
 Riad El Solh 1107 2020  
 Beirut, Lebanon  
 Tel: 961-1-353228

**The Debs Center - New York Office**  
 3 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza,  
 8th Floor  
 New York, NY 10017-2303

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

# Contents

2024 Issue No. 2

Feature  
Stories

**Shaping Tomorrow's  
Education Today**  
Inside AUB Online's  
Inaugural Symposium

10

**AUB Mediterraneo**  
A Student-Eye View

11

**AUB Technology  
Conference**  
An Extraordinary  
Gathering in Silicon Valley

17

**"Coming Out in Beirut.  
Canceled"**  
An Exhibition of  
Marginalized Artworks

18

**155<sup>th</sup> Commencement**  
In Photos

24

**Innovating for Health**  
AUBMC Leads with Lebanon's  
First TriClip Procedure

27

**Introducing  
Four Alumni  
Social Media  
Influencers**

32

**Recognizing  
Exceptional Work  
in Advancement**

35



8

**Excellence in Motion  
AUB's Trailblazing Athletes on the Rise**

From the sprint tracks of Lebanon to the MMA cages of Asia, AUB's scholars are breaking records and barriers alike.



12

**Building an Ecosystem for Innovation and  
Entrepreneurship**

AUB's integrated approach to sparking economic and innovative growth in Lebanon.



20

**Safeguarding AUB's Mission  
The Enduring Vigilance of the Board of Trustees**

AUB's Board of Trustees champions a transformative education mission, guiding the university through times of peace and peril.



28

**Navigating the Fog  
Dementia and Care in Lebanon**

Unveiling the complexities of dementia in Lebanon, Dr. Monique Chaaya pioneers research and solutions for an aging population.

In Every  
Issue

**Views from Campus**  
Letter from  
the President

1

**Campus Snapshots**

4

**Face to Face**  
Bridging AUB's Needs  
with Compassion

16

**Check Up**  
Confronting  
Antimicrobial  
Resistance

26

**Published and  
Produced**

30

**Creative Minds**

31

**WAAUB  
Recently Elected**

34

**Class Notes**

36

**In Memoriam**

44

**Aiducation**

49



# Campus Snapshots



Lighting our Streets | February

In collaboration with Rebirth Beirut and MEDCO, we've lit up the streets around the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), continuing to bring the light of hope back to the neighborhood.



Iftar at the Dorms | March

To mark the commencement of the sacred month of Ramadan, students at the New Women's Dorms treated themselves to a delightful Iftar feast.



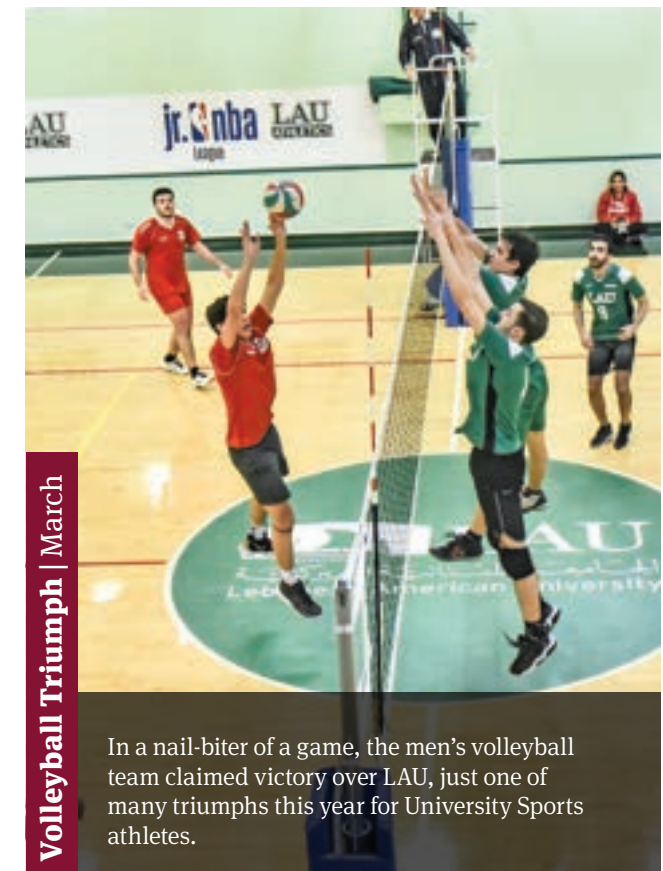
Color Week | February

Graphic design students explore hue, tint, tone, and shade during Color Week, part of their semester-long creative journey with Professor Greta Khoury in the studio.



Palestine Week | March

Palestine Week featured 70+ events exploring the Palestinian struggle through lectures, performances, workshops, exhibitions, and discussions, fostering solidarity and awareness within AUB and beyond.



Volleyball Triumph | March

In a nail-biter of a game, the men's volleyball team claimed victory over LAU, just one of many triumphs this year for University Sports athletes.



University for Seniors | March

On Mother's Day, women from the University for Seniors beamed with pride as they helped support our students' fundraising initiatives.



**Oriental Night | April**



The Arabic Ensemble of the Zaki Nassif Program for Music performed alongside students from the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music, utterly enchanting the audience at Assembly Hall.

**Savoring Diversity | April**



“Savoring Diversity: One Bite at a Time” celebrated the richness of cultures within the AUB community through food, music, and an embrace of inclusivity.

**AUB Spring Fair | April**



The Spring Fair offered a diverse range of family-friendly activities, including egg hunts, contests, music, carnival games, food vendors, and local businesses showcasing their brands.

**Laughter Yoga | April**



Members of the student body, faculty, and staff participated in a laughter yoga session led by Lebanese actor Wissam Sabbagh, discovering relaxation methods through guided laughter and breathing exercises.

**AUB Outdoors | May**



Standing as the largest student-led event in the MENA region, AUB Outdoors 2024, themed Disco Fever, was an electrifying display of vibrant energy and exhilarating performances.

**Ring Ceremony | May**



Marking a momentous occasion, the class of 2024 receives their AUB rings, signifying their entry into a distinguished alumni network.

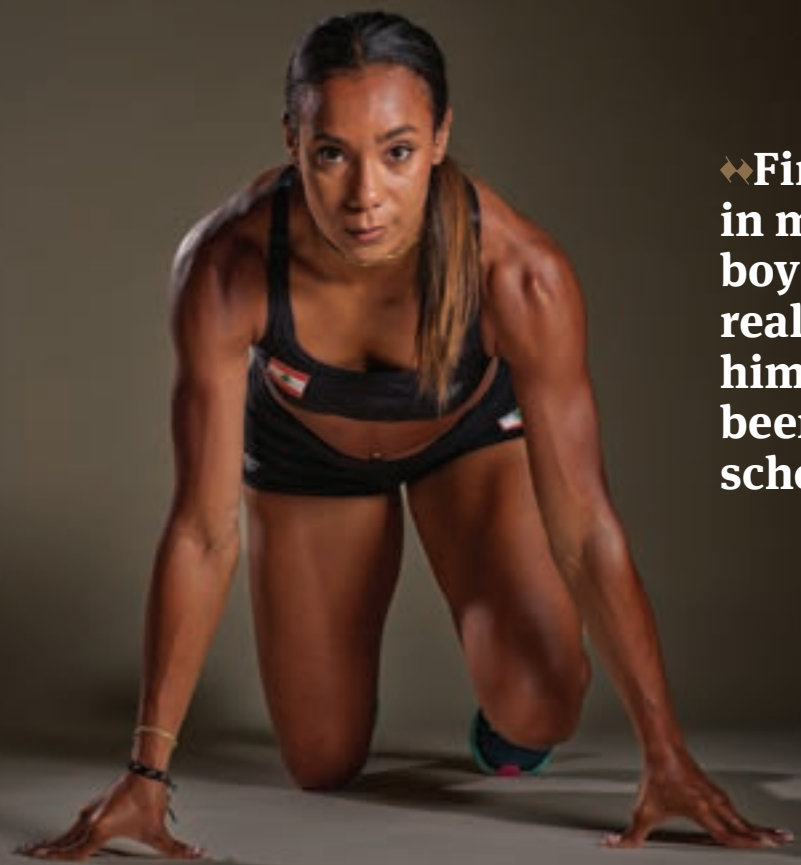


# Excellence *in Motion*



When you Google “Aziza Sbaity,” a summary of her Wikipedia page appears above the headline “People also search for,” beneath which you’ll find a who’s who of inspirational women from the Middle East. When you Google “Charbel Farah,” you’ll come across an article about his gold medal performance at the 2022 Asian International Mixed Martial Arts Federation (IMMAF) Championship. Together, Farah and Sbaity are the first two recipients of the President’s Athletic Scholarship at AUB. “These are pretty high-level athletes we’re talking about,” says University Athletics Director Tarek Abou Omar.

Sbaity is the current Lebanese national record holder for the 100-meter sprint. She first broke the record in 2018 and has since broken it six more times. Her sprinting journey began when she moved to Lebanon at the age of 12, following the breakout of civil war in Liberia, where she’d spent her childhood. “First, I beat the girls in my school, then the boys. One boy was really angry I’d beaten him because he’d been the fastest at the school.” Today, in between coursework—she’s working toward an MBA—Sbaity is aiming to qualify for the Olympic Games Paris 2024.



◆◆**First, I beat the girls in my school, then the boys. One boy was really angry I’d beaten him because he’d been the fastest at the school.**◆◆



Farah, a political studies major, is equally ambitious. “I want a UFC belt,” he says, referring to mixed martial arts (MMA)’s premier professional organization, the Ultimate Fighting Championship. Like Sbaity, he began training at age 12.

“I started training twice a week and wrestling with my father at home. He acted like we were playing, but it was actually wrestling.” Today, he trains three hours a day and fights in international competitions.

Sprinting is already a collegiate sport in Lebanon. MMA is not, but Abou Omar believes it might be in the future. Until then, Charbel will compete for AUB in wrestling and grappling. “The ultimate goal is to build athletic potential in Lebanon, first at the university level, and then

more generally. Right now, the culture here is ‘*Rooh zala darsak, shoo badak biryada*.’ [What are you going to get from playing sports, go to class!]” But these athletes prove that both are possible at AUB.

◆◆**I started training twice a week and wrestling with my father at home. He acted like we were playing, but it was actually wrestling.**◆◆



# Shaping Tomorrow's Education Today

## Inside AUB Online's Inaugural Symposium



Over the span of three days, thought leaders, innovators, and educators from around the globe came together to discuss the present and future of online education and the tremendous implications of this rapid digital transformation for higher learning.

From February 22 to 24, 2024, AUB Online held its inaugural symposium, "Trends and Transformations in Higher Education," including prominent figures from McKinsey & Co., TikTok, Meta, GroupM | Mindshare, KPMG, Ogilvy, the University of California-Berkeley, Edelsy Consultancy, and elsewhere.

The symposium addressed key themes such as the strategic role of product management in higher education, the critical mission of instructional designers as change agents, and the profound impact of social media trends on the academic landscape. One session looked at the potential for artificial intelligence technologies to personalize learning journeys and leverage strategic data utilization, making learning more interactive, engaging, and tailored to individual student needs. Another explored higher education trends on platforms like TikTok and highlighted the importance of adapting to the preferences of a new generation of learners.

Amid these discussions, Dr. Yousif Asfour, chief innovation and transformation officer at AUB, noted, "Digital transformation entails coordinated shifts in our everyday culture, processes, and technology to enable new educational and operational models."

Other sessions emphasized the significance of aligning educational innovation with the changing societal landscape, ensuring that the delivery of education remains relevant and responsive to the broader expectations of society. Notably, Shajia Sarfraz and Stephen Hall from McKinsey & Co. provided attendees with invaluable insights into the sector's challenges and opportunities, illuminating the necessary skills and knowledge for the future workforce and how their evolving trends impact and reshape higher education.

President Fadlo R. Khuri detailed the vision propelling the university's strides into the digital age. "We believe AUB Online is such a critical component for our university. This is more relevant than ever. It's really about enfranchising the disenfranchised learner, and that's really the driving force behind why we persuaded Dr. Yousif Asfour and Patrick Fitzgerald to get their feet wet in this area" Khuri elaborated.

In an era where the only constant is change, AUB Online's inaugural symposium stands as a testament to the university's forward-thinking ethos and dedication to harnessing technology for the greater good. By fostering knowledge-sharing and encouraging dialogue through its symposiums, AUB Online is not just responding to the trends and transformations in higher education; it is actively shaping the future.



# AUB Mediterraneo

## A Student-Eye View



"Life here unfolds at a more relaxed pace," says Iakovos Ioannou, a computer science student at the American University of Beirut – Mediterraneo (AUB Mediterraneo) in Pafos, Cyprus, who is part of the inaugural cohort of students who kicked off their first year at the university in September 2023. Ioannou loves the vibrant town of Pafos on the coast of the Mediterranean that holds numerous archaeological sites and beautiful beaches.

University location can have a profound impact on the course of a student's academic and personal journey. Sajed Abdallah, who is pursuing a BS in industrial engineering, says that Pafos "is the perfect place for people who want a simple life." Students at AUB Mediterraneo find that Pafos is not only "a great place to live," as Aya El Saoudi, who is pursuing an MS in business analytics puts it, but also an easy and fun place to explore because of the town's flat terrain. She says, "Everyone is exceptionally friendly and welcoming, creating a strong sense of belonging."

Housing also plays a major role in a successful student experience. Mitchell Ogheneserome Amarie, who is pursuing a BBA in management, raves about the dorms that she describes as top-notch in terms of design, outdoor gardens, and communal areas. She is also enjoying the diversity of AUB Mediterraneo: "Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common. It has made me feel like a fully recognized and respected proponent of my own unique heritage which is where my strength lies. I for one can say that it is a very student-inclined school with state-of-the-art facilities. . . . My experience so far has been second to none!"

In terms of activities, students at AUB Mediterraneo are enjoying extracurricular activities that they find culturally enriching. Zain Ababneh, studying philosophy, politics, and economics (PPE), enjoys the many activities organized by the university such as "visiting villages, going on hikes, and being part of local communities." Zain also appreciates the supportive community at AUB

Mediterraneo. She explains that the university "truly feels like a home away from home" thanks to her friends, colleagues, professors, and deans—the people she sees almost every day.

As a twin campus of the globally recognized American University of Beirut, AUB Mediterraneo attracts students from different parts of the world seeking an American liberal arts education that prioritizes freedom of expression and offers academic programs that require students to take general education courses outside their major.

Bridging cultures in the coastal city of Pafos in Cyprus, AUB Mediterraneo promises a vibrant, adventurous, diverse, and secure student life and globally recognized degrees, all in a safe and flourishing environment.

♦♦ **Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common.** ♦♦

Read more





# Building an Ecosystem for Innovation & Entrepreneurship



At AUB lives all the talent, know-how, and drive to host a robust environment for innovation and entrepreneurship. But it takes time, as well as monumental support and experience, for all the components to come together. Campus initiatives focused on innovation and entrepreneurship have grown over the last 15 years, overlapping, collaborating, and getting buffeted by the challenges in Lebanon but also identifying niches and finding success. Today, these programs are coming together to build that integrated entrepreneurial environment.

“As biologists say, we are moving out of the fledgling landscape stage,” says Professor Bijan Azad, director of the Darwazah Center for Innovation Management and Entrepreneurship. “We are not 100 percent integrated, but we’re moving toward being that vibrant, thriving ecosystem.” His hands sketch an illustration in the air. “When most of the ‘fauna and flora’ have evolved to become an ecosystem, that will promote economic development in an effective way.”

Yousif Asfour, AUB’s chief innovation and transformation officer and executive director at the Talal and Madiha Zein AUB-Innovation Park (iPark), tries to articulate the AUB difference. “We are about educating people not just to get jobs but to create them. We want to develop leaders who can help build the economic ecosystem of Lebanon and then further build the economy of the entire region. The AUB culture can be an advantage. When resources are limited, you can sit in the corner and cry, or you can say, ‘No, I will make a difference.’ Instead of being defeated by the challenges, successful teams improvise.”

“We have the advantage of tremendous intellectual wealth,” says Maha Zouwayhed, associate director at Zein AUB iPark, who works with dozens of aspiring entrepreneurs in the AUB ecosystem. “Our people are cultured, multilingual, and cosmopolitan. They are skilled, smart, and ready to plug and play. For finding feasible solutions for real problems, we are the ‘dudes.’”

♦♦ **We are about educating people not just to get jobs but to create them. We want to develop leaders who can help build the economic ecosystem of Lebanon and then further build the economy of the entire region.** ♦♦

## CREATING A CATALYST FOR INNOVATION

Initiatives across campus (and outside) offer capacity-building and product-development support for students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

### Patents and Tech Transfer

In 2013, AUB established the Technology Transfer Unit (TTU) and the Center for Research and Innovation (CRInn) to support patent applications and to protect intellectual property, critical components of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Both units are under the Office of Grants and Contracts, where Director Fadia Homeidan and her team work tirelessly to ensure AUB innovation is protected. By 2016, the initiative led to an average of 9 invention disclosures annually, with 10 full patents granted, 20 pending, and 3 provisional applications. Additionally, AUB coholds four patents with institutions in Saudi Arabia, France, and the USA.

### Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA)

Long a hub of innovation and nurturing creative human capital, MSFEA established in 2018 the Final Year Project Accelerator Program to help enterprising students bring their final year projects to the next level as potential viable businesses. This effort became the Entrepreneurship Track, which works with students even before they enter MSFEA. It also helps faculty and staff who need support with a startup idea. Such potential startups can continue to be accelerated and incubated at places like iPark, CRInn, or the Darwazah Center.

## Darwazah Center for Innovation Management & Entrepreneurship at the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business (OSB)

Founded in 2011, the Darwazah Center (DC) works with startups at all stages, including established small businesses. Azad knows the daunting fact that even after surviving the odds of being able to launch, 80 percent of small businesses will fail within the first five years. These companies, which he calls “the poor cousins” (no longer in the initial funding stage but not big enough to thrive) make up 92 percent of businesses in Lebanon, and the DC is determined to help them through the “Valley of Death.” The valley is where the visionary entrepreneur typically can no longer succeed on the skills that launched him or her and now needs the added help of separate manager and technician roles. It’s where the owner needs to let go of having complete control and face the challenge of scaling up with a functioning team.

The AUB-SPARK Scaling-up of Startups (SSS) Program, in partnership with the DC, gives small businesses “a mini-MBA in 16 weeks,” Azad says. “We give the entrepreneurs the tools to diagnose why they have stalled and how to devise the plan for moving forward. They gain the capacity to analyze their own marketing, sales, management, budgeting, and fulfillment and see how to fix what’s not working. A lot of businesses in our region are family businesses, skeptical of ‘letting go’ in order to grow. Some have gone flat as far as growth and revenue, and these are the businesses we can help.”

### TALAL AND MADIHA ZEIN AUB-INNOVATION PARK

The Zein AUB iPark helps startup teams bridge the gap between academia and investment and commercialization. Teams with at least one founder connected to AUB face the commercial world, competing for precious resources to bring their ideas to market. The iPark is only four years old and operates with only five staff members, “yet we’re already leading in Lebanon in terms of education and entrepreneurship,” says Asfour. “Others are ahead of us in acceleration and incubation, but we are catching up and have a good reputation, especially in the health sciences sector.”

In 2023, Zein AUB iPark sent three promising startups to a five-week accelerator program at Draper University in California, where Fixalign, a dental startup, placed in the top 5 out of 95 teams.

Most recently, the AUB Mediterraneo Innovation Center was launched in collaboration with the Municipality of Pafos in Cyprus. It will host startups from the Zein AUB iPark in Beirut, including three that have entered the growth stage of their business journey: two in the energy sector and one in AgriTech. With this opportunity, the startups gain access to workspaces, mentorship, and network connections, giving them access to the European market and investors.





**SOME ACTUAL INNOVATIONS...**

Far from an exhaustive list, which would take up far more than this whole magazine, what follow are a few examples of innovations, startups, and projects being realized as a result of AUB's entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem.

**The GHATA Project**

In 2013, eager to help refugees have a viable learning environment, MSFEA students designed the first GHATA unit, a portable shelter to be used as a classroom. A year later, the GHATA unit was patented by AUB and granted a decree to be used for educational purposes, eventually earning accreditation by the Lebanese Ministry of Education. GHATA units are still in use, able to endure severe weather conditions and having a lifespan of between 10 and 15 years. The invention has since been scaled up across the country.



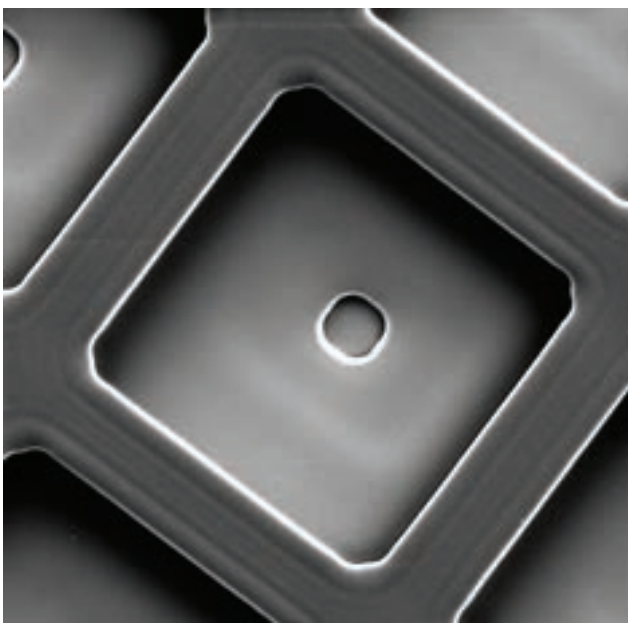
**Mobile Antenna**

The invention, codeveloped by Maria Sakovsky, an aerospace engineer at Stanford University, and Joseph Costantine, electrical and computer engineer at AUB, is a lightweight, collapsible helix antenna making communication possible in difficult environments such as disaster or conflict zones. It is portable and can communicate with either satellites or terrestrial devices. The researchers used shapes that have never been used on a helical antenna before. The innovation makes it ideally suited for scenarios where infrastructure is damaged and impromptu communication is urgent. Sakovsky says the device's light construction will also make it conducive for deployment in space.



**Cancer CHIP**

The Arab Research & Innovation Co-Funded Alliances recently accepted research from the lab of Dr. Massoud Khraiche in AUB's Biomedical Engineering Program and ranked it 11th out of 500 submissions. The research focuses on early-cancer-detection chip technology. Dr. Khraiche's team has developed a way of utilizing the mechanical properties of circulating tumor cells (CTCs) to enhance detection and characterization.



**DLOC Biosystems**

This company, now operating out of the UK, spun off from a research project in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at AUB on breast cancer metastasis in mammary ducts. That led to new methods and tools in tissue culture that provided the seeds from which DLOC's technology evolved. In its early days, the startup was incubated at the Darwazah Center. DLOC then went on to secure \$1.2 million in funding after winning multiple local and international entrepreneurship competitions, including the Stars of Science innovation contest. With this funding, DLOC significantly improved, tested, validated, and patented its technology, looking to launch its Series A fundraising round.



**Bokja**

Gladys Abou Diwan Saliba, managing director at Bokja, found the help she needed at the AUB-SPARK Scaling-up of Startups (SSS) Program in partnership with the Darwazah Center. Bokja is a design studio in Beirut that represents a diversity of textile crafts in the Arab region. Saliba soaked up the mentorship in marketing strategy and branding in order to scale up Bokja's business. At her graduation from the program, she thanked the Darwazah and AUB-SPARK teams for providing tools for her to do her job better. "Thank you," she said, "for teaching us how to fish instead of giving us the fish."







## Face to Face

### Bridging AUB's Needs with Compassion

When a colleague of Tony Achkar's was suffering from a hernia, he called the Patient Access Office at the AUB Medical Center and got her scheduled for an operation the next day. When another colleague needed help getting her daughter into International College's nursery program, he made the call, and it happened. And when yet a different colleague suddenly went blind in one eye, Tony got her an appointment with a specialist she'd had trouble reaching.

He is AUB's "mokhtar," a reference to the historical facilitator, problem solver, and bridge builder of the Arab village. He doesn't work at AUB so much as he is of AUB. His connection to the university is generational and total. He was born and raised on campus. His parents spent their entire careers at the university—his father in the Housing Department, helping faculty and staff secure housing in and around campus, and his mother at the Campus Materials Management Department, managing university supplies. He knows everyone and, thus, can sometimes, with a phone call, find his way through the bureaucratic morass and make things happen.

He is the confidant and the agent, his kindness apparent in crow's feet around his smiling eyes. "Tony represents the true essence of kindness," says one colleague. "He's always ready to lend a helping hand, never misses an opportunity to

volunteer and assist, and always goes above and beyond to support," says another.

Born in 1985, at the height of the Lebanese Civil War, he and his family took refuge at the AUB Faculty Apartments when the city was divided between East and West. "I was always in or around campus, from my youngest years," Achkar says. He enrolled at AUB, graduating in 2009 with a degree in landscape design. He then worked for several prominent Lebanese firms whose portfolios included the design of the Sanayeh Park in Beirut and the marina. "I was there for three years, doing computer-aided design drawings, working toward becoming an engineer."

Ultimately, a love for AUB, and perhaps a sense of nostalgia, drew him back. "I have such a longstanding connection to the university," he says. As Senior Benefits Assistant - Education Services, Achkar facilitates education subsidies for members of the AUB community. "A faculty member will come and tell us that one of their children wants to study engineering at AUB. So, we will transfer funds to the Engineering Department to pay for that student's tuition," Achkar explains. "I love that AUB's education benefits are available to everyone, from the janitors to the doctors. And I'm always happy when I see the son or daughter of a housekeeper graduating as an engineer."



# AUB Technology Conference

## An Extraordinary Gathering in Silicon Valley



More than 200 people, including senior university leadership from Beirut, attended the AUB North American Technology Conference in Palo Alto, California on April 19-21, 2024. "It was an extraordinary gathering," commented Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations-North America Lina Jazi (BS '89), "and an invaluable opportunity for us to showcase what AUB is doing in the tech field in terms of academic programs – and to hear from some of the biggest names in the field about important issues and future trends." The conference was also a successful fundraiser. More than \$2 million was donated to AUB in advance of, and during, the dinner for university initiatives including \$83,000 for the recently established Northern California Chapter Scholarship Fund.

Many AUB alumni were among the distinguished list of panelists. Abdo George Kadifa (BE '81), chairman elect of the AUB Board of Trustees and managing director of Sumeru Equity Partners, commented, "AUB is a major presence in Silicon Valley. Over the last 50 years, our graduates have contributed to the innovation, research, engineering, management, and education fields that we see realized today in the valley."

The conference began with an informal gathering at Terún Pizzeria on Friday evening. Participants gathered on Saturday to hear panel discussions on entrepreneurship, digital businesses, and artificial intelligence, an introduction to the Talal and Madiha Zein AUB-Innovation Park by Chief Information and Transformation Officer Yousif Asfour; a presentation by MSFEA Dean Alan

Shihadeh about what sets AUB apart in engineering and design; and a fireside chat with Sassine Ghazi, president, CEO, and board member of Synopsys, with Trustee Fuad "Ford" Tamer (BE '83), senior operating partner at Francisco Partners, on scaling a technology company.

The Saturday evening gala featured welcoming remarks by President Fadlo R. Khuri who provided an update from campus. He also spoke about some of AUB's plans in the area of computing and data sciences. Another highlight of the evening was the president's announcement of the **Nabil Bukhalid People's Choice Award for Innovation**, which is named for the late Nabil Bukhalid (BE '81, EMBA '05) who headed the AUB computing and networking team for many years and was responsible for bringing the internet to Lebanon.

Reflecting on the conference, President Khuri said, "Deeper and broader engagement with the university's alumni is critical to expanding AUB's impact. This event is just one of many that has taken place in North America recently, which have gathered our exceptional graduates across generations. These events are invaluable to our university."

Many alumni and friends played key roles in helping to organize the conference including Chairman Elect Abdo Kadifa, Trustees Fuad Tamer and Kevin Taweel, Murad Al Haj (BE '06) and the leadership of the Northern California Alumni Chapter, WAAAUB Advisory Board member Walid Ali-Ahmad (BE '88), who were ably supported by Sally Kadifa and Rula Tamer.





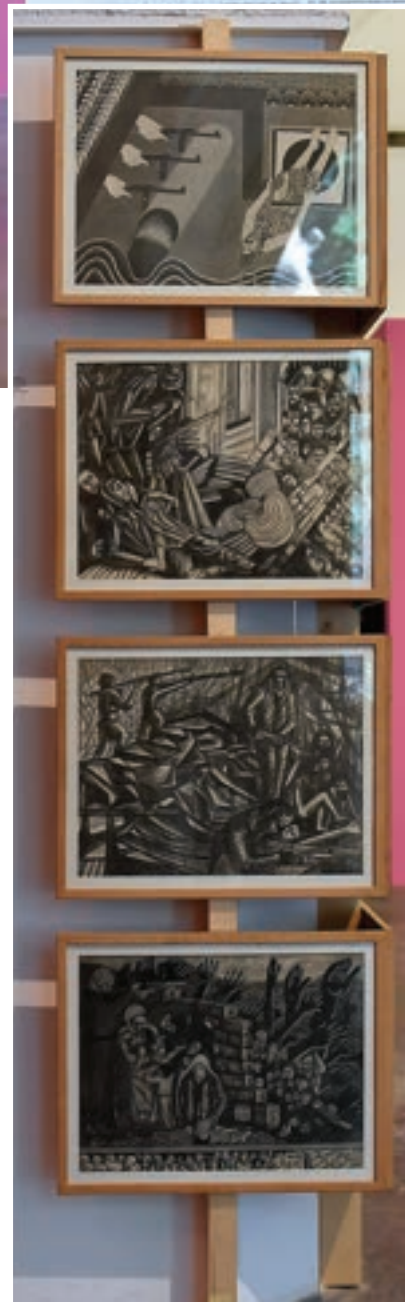
# “Coming Out in Beirut. Canceled”

## An Exhibition of Marginalized Artworks



Amidst the bustling cultural scene of Beirut, the AUB Art Galleries and Collections recently held an extraordinary art exhibit. This innovative exhibition aimed to shed light on the less visible aspects of contemporary artistic and collecting practices by bringing forward artworks that have long been confined to the storage locations of remote galleries and collectors' closets.

“Coming Out in Beirut. Canceled” stands as a poignant reminder of the power of art to reflect and challenge societal norms and prejudices. Through its innovative approach and the curator’s adaptability, the exhibition successfully brought to light the hidden narratives of marginalized artworks, drawing parallels with broader issues of visibility, acceptance, and recognition within society. Even in its unfinished state, in respect to the war in Gaza, the exhibition invites viewers to reflect on the complexities of artistic and personal expression in the face of adversity.







# Safeguarding AUB's Mission

## The Enduring Vigilance of the Board of Trustees

Backstage at AUB, a group of leaders works tirelessly to make the university the beacon of higher education we know it to be. They are individuals from around the world from various walks of life—from academia to business, medicine to the arts. They're the Board of Trustees, and what ties them together is a shared belief: an AUB education can change the world. The trustees, elected by their peers, share a conviction in

the transformative power of postsecondary education. This is underpinned by a steadfast dedication to AUB's mission, an unwavering commitment that serves as a beacon of assurance for the institution's long-term success.

No time underscores this body's importance to the university more than the Lebanese Civil War, when

AUB faced threats to its very existence. In 1976, as the uncertainty of Lebanon's future cast a long shadow, the AUB community and Board of Trustees were faced with dire financial insecurity, an exodus of faculty and staff from Lebanon, and a student body unsure of what their nation's future held, let alone their ability to continue their education. During this time, the trustees took the bold

step of proving their commitment to maintaining the university's operation by voting to make operating the university an abiding policy.

Minutes from the September 1, 1976, meeting read, "The Trustees expressed great admiration for the loyalty of the University personnel on all levels—faculty, staff, students, syndicate workers, and alumni. The Board again confirmed its feeling that the University is one of the most important forces in the future of the Middle East and intends in every way possible to keep it functioning in spite of the very threatening situation."

At the forefront of these efforts stood Trustee Alfred Howell, a visionary whose contributions would leave

an indelible mark on AUB's history. Not only did he serve on the board, but his pivotal role in founding the AUB Foundation was a strategic lifeline, establishing critical funding to sustain the university's operations during the war. Trustee Howell's stewardship as chair of the AUB Foundation was lauded by former AUB President Robert M. Haddad, who noted that "future generations at AUB will recall that his astute investment policy rescued an AUB poised at the edge of disaster, and the AUB Foundation persists as a monument to Dr. Howell's acuity and foresight."

Their heroic efforts embody AUB's spirit, ensuring it remains a place where education thrives in the face of obstacles, shaping leaders and

innovators who carry forth its legacy of impact and service. But this story is more than a tale of governance. It celebrates a group of visionaries deeply woven into AUB's past, present, and future story.

♦♦ **The Trustees expressed great admiration for the loyalty of the University personnel on all levels.** ♦♦



Thomas Q. Morris (second from left) during the rebuilding of College Hall, 1993



Philip S. Khoury (fourth from left) with trustees and leadership, 2023

### Chairs and Presidents

**William A. Booth, Chair (1863–95)**  
Daniel Bliss, Founding President (1866–1902)

**Morris K. Jesup, Chair (1897–1907)**  
Daniel Bliss, President (1866–1902);  
Howard S. Bliss, President (1902–20)

**David Stuart Dodge, Chair (1908–22)**  
Howard S. Bliss, President (1902–20)

**William M. Kingsley, Chair (1923–39)**  
Bayard Dodge, President (1923–48)

**Harold B. Hoskins, Chair (1939–46)**  
Bayard Dodge, President (1923–48)

**John C. Case, Chair (1955–64)**  
J. Paul Leonard, President (1957–61)

**Calvin H. Plimpton, Chair (1965–74)**  
Samuel B. Kirkwood, President (1965–76)

**Howard W. Page, Chair (1973–76)**  
Samuel B. Kirkwood, President (1965–76)

**Calvin H. Plimpton, Chair (1976–82)**  
Harold E. Hoelsher, President (1977–81)  
Malcolm Kerr, President (1981–84)





Thomas Q. Morris, Philip S. Khoury, and Abdo G. Kadifa at the Debs Center in New York, a fully equipped conference center just steps from the United Nations that serves as a vital link between North America and Beirut.

As the university welcomes its new chair, Abdo G. Kadifa, we also take note of three previous chairs: Richard A. Debs (chair, 1994–2005), Thomas Q. Morris (chair, 2005–09), and Philip S. Khoury (chair, 2009–24), who represented the worlds of investment banking, medicine, and academia, respectively. They stand out as exemplars of exceptional character who brought their expertise to the job of leading and serving the university.

**Richard A. Debs** was elected as a trustee in 1976, board chair in 1994, and chair emeritus in 2005. His father immigrated to the United States from Deir el Ghazal in 1900, and his mother’s family was Syrian American. Dr. Debs had a highly influential career in finance, investment banking, and philanthropy in New York City. He was instrumental in the robust recovery and growth of the university in the years following Lebanon’s civil war. Dr. Debs passed away peacefully at his home on January 28, 2024. His recent death deeply saddens the AUB community.

**Please read his obituary in “In Memoriam” on page 45.**



Richard A. Debs

“Ignorance is a disease, and its only effective medicine is education. And that’s how AUB has made, and will continue to make, its great contribution. The question now is, will the disease of ignorance spread once again, leading to more turmoil, or will these recent tragic events be a catalyst for better understanding, for better communication, for better cooperation, and more progress in the years ahead? I believe, and believe firmly, that it will be the latter. I believe in the Lebanese people and their newfound ability to discard the old ways of divisive thinking and to work together for the common good. And I certainly believe in the constructive role that AUB can play in that process.”

*Richard A. Debs, upon receiving AUB’s Doctorate of Humane Letters in 2005.*



Thomas Q. Morris

**Thomas Q. Morris** was elected as a trustee in 1985, board chair in 2005, and board chair emeritus in 2009. He first came to Lebanon in 1982 at the height of the civil war as part of a team of medical experts that ultimately recommended the reaccreditation of AUB’s Faculty of Medicine by the New York State Education Department. Dr. Morris was immediately impressed with the resilience and capability of the medical staff, who had seamlessly transformed the hospital from peacetime functioning to a full-time war hospital. An abiding respect for the AUB community has guided Dr. Morris’s commitment to the university and its hospital for the past 40-plus years. As chair, he led, encouraged, and supported many university initiatives, including the university’s accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the reintroduction of PhD programs, and the highly successful Campaign for Excellence (2003–07), which enabled the construction and renovation of several facilities on campus. At the medical center, Dr. Morris presided over the establishment of several institutes and centers, as well as the renovation of the Emergency Department.



Philip S. Khoury

**Philip S. Khoury** was elected as a trustee in 1997, board chair in 2009, and chair emeritus in 2024. His strong generational ties to AUB began with his grandfather, the noted mathematician and astronomer Mansur Hanna Jurdak (BA 1901), and continued with his mother, Angela Jurdak Khoury (BA ’37, MA ’38). She became AUB’s first female instructor and Lebanon’s first female diplomat. Philip Khoury grew up in Washington, DC, and came to AUB to study from 1969 to 1970. Khoury led AUB as chair through a prolonged period of growth and stability followed by a sharp contraction resulting from Lebanon’s severe liquidity crisis in 2019, the devastating explosion at the Beirut Port in 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Khoury oversaw a visionary plan to deal with a vast web of fiscal complications resulting from Lebanon’s currency collapse. During his tenure as board chair, AUB conducted the largest capital campaign in the MENA region with BOLDLY AUB, tripled student financial aid, restored tenure after more than 30 years, undertook a massive expansion of AUBMC, and, perhaps most significantly, opened AUB’s first twin campus, AUB Mediterraneo in Pafos, Cyprus. As chair, Khoury has led the university with courage, vision, and selfless dedication—qualities he shares with his forebears.



Abdo G. Kadifa

**Abdo G. Kadifa**, a name synonymous with visionary leadership and technological advancement, brings to AUB a legacy of achievement and a deep-rooted passion for progress. His appointment as the new chair of AUB’s Board of Trustees is a momentous honor, underscoring his invaluable contributions and steadfast dedication to the university since he joined the board in 2014.

His journey, from an AUB electrical engineering graduate to a luminary in the global technology landscape, reflects a relentless pursuit of excellence. Kadifa’s career spans leadership positions at Hewlett-Packard, where he was an executive vice president, to cofounding Sumeru Equity Partners, marking him as a significant figure in the tech industry. His contributions extend beyond the corporate realm, deeply engaging with the Lebanese diaspora and championing tech entrepreneurship through his chairmanship at LebNet.

Chair Kadifa embodies the ethos of AUB’s commitment to fostering leaders who dream, strive, and build a better world. As he prepares to steer the university into new horizons, the AUB community stands united in its support, eagerly anticipating the next chapter in AUB’s storied legacy.

## Chairs and Presidents

**Najeeb E. Halaby, Chair (1983–85)**  
Malcolm Kerr, President (1981–84)  
Calvin H. Plimpton, President (1984–87)

**Frederic P. Herter, Chair (1985–87)**  
Calvin H. Plimpton, President (1984–87)

**Robert F. Goheen, Chair (1987–94)**  
Frederic Herter, President (1987–93)  
Robert Haddad, President (1993–96)

**Richard A. Debs, Chair (1994–2005)**  
Robert Haddad, President (1993–96)  
David S. Dodge, President (1996–97)  
John Waterbury, President (1997–2008)

**Thomas Q. Morris, Chair (2005–09)**  
John Waterbury, President (1997–2008)  
Peter F. Dorman, President (2008–15)

**Philip S. Khoury, Chair (2009–24)**  
Peter F. Dorman, President (2008–15)  
Fadlo R. Khuri, President (2015–Present)

**Abdo George Kadifa, Chair (July 1, 2024–Present)**  
Fadlo R. Khuri, President (2015–Present)

**Not listed here are a number of acting chairs and presidents who filled in during gap years.**





# 155<sup>th</sup> Commencement Exercises

June 7 & 8, 2024



Scan to see  
more pictures.





# Check Up: Confronting Antimicrobial Resistance



**Dr. Souha Kanj Sharara, head of AUB's Division of Infectious Diseases, champions the fight against antimicrobial resistance. Her innovative work and dedication to public health addresses the crisis at multiple levels. Dr. Sharara shares her insights on the implications of this pressing threat and AUB's strategic efforts to combat it.**

**Can you discuss what antimicrobial resistance is and its implications?**

Antimicrobial resistance is the ability of microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites, to resist the effects of medications that were once effective for treating infections caused by them. This resistance occurs when these microorganisms evolve in response to the use of these medicines, making standard treatments ineffective and infections persist, increasing the risk of disease transmission.

Some key effects of the antimicrobial resistance pandemic on public

health include higher death rates due to difficulty in treating infections and increased healthcare costs due to the need for more complex treatments, often requiring higher levels of medical care and longer recovery periods. Our research in this field has focused on studying common hospital-acquired infections, the risk factors for resistance, ways to prevent them, and their optimal treatment.

**How do the challenges of combating antibiotic resistance in the Arab world compare with those globally?**

The region struggles to implement proper antibiotic use due to limited resources, including the inaccessibility of some antibiotics. Unregulated, over-the-counter access fosters inappropriate use of antibiotics in humans, animals, and the environment. Moreover, underdeveloped surveillance systems hinder the assessment of resistance patterns and targeted interventions.

Cross-border coordination is challenged by diverse healthcare systems and regional conflicts. Additionally, disparities in quality healthcare access exacerbate resistance issues, particularly in rural areas coupled with insufficient public awareness campaigns that hinder efforts to promote responsible antibiotic use.

**What is AUB doing to tackle antimicrobial resistance?**

AUB has undertaken many initiatives to address antimicrobial resistance, including studying the epidemiology of resistant organisms, investigating outbreaks, understanding the molecular typing of resistant bacteria, testing for the presence of such microorganisms in poultry and the environment, developing prevention strategies, and innovating approaches to treat multidrug-resistant bacteria. Just as importantly, we participated in landmark clinical trials that have changed the practice of dealing with common infectious diseases.



# Innovating for Health

## AUBMC Leads with Lebanon's First TriClip Procedure

Curing diseases is often based on treatment or surgical intervention. But what do you do when a conventional health procedure is deemed as risky as the disease itself? AUBMC's multidisciplinary team at the Structural Heart Program proved that it was time for innovation and performed the first TriClip procedure in Lebanon and the Levant.

Tricuspid regurgitation (TR) is a heart dysfunction of improper closure of the flaps of the tricuspid valve, which controls the flow of blood from the heart's right atrium (top chamber) to the right ventricle (bottom chamber). Moderate or severe TR can lead to irreversible damage to heart muscle tissue and adverse outcomes such as exhaustion, irregular heartbeats, and poor quality of life. It is predictive of poor survival if left untreated.

Despite these findings, few patients with significant TR undergo surgery, opting to live with the perils of poor heart function. The reason is that surgical repair and replacement procedure options have yielded significant pre- and postoperative complications, leading to mortality and morbidity risks.

The TriClip procedure first emerged in 2020 as an alternative to treat patients with symptomatic severe TR. Replacing the need for open heart surgery, the TriClip procedure delivers a clip device to the heart through the femoral vein in the leg to clasp together a portion of the leaflets—or flaps of tissue—of the tricuspid valve, thus reducing the backflow of blood.

At AUBMC, a team led by Dr. Fadi Sawaya, director of the Structural Heart Program, and Dr. Walid Gharzuddin, director of the Non-Invasive Cardiac Lab, successfully performed their first TriClip procedure in January on a 60-year-old woman with severe TR and a history of several comorbidities and mitral valve disease.

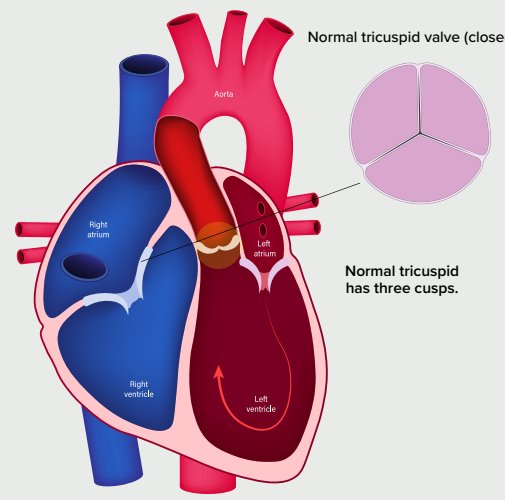
“This innovative transcatheter therapy offers new hope to patients with tricuspid regurgitation, providing a minimally invasive solution to a condition that once required open heart surgery,” says Dr. Sawaya.

From performing the first open heart surgery in the region in 1958 to the first TriClip procedure in 2024, AUBMC continues to bring world-class healthcare to the people of Lebanon and the wider region. True to its mission, it pioneers revolutionary interventions that combine expertise with cutting-edge technology.

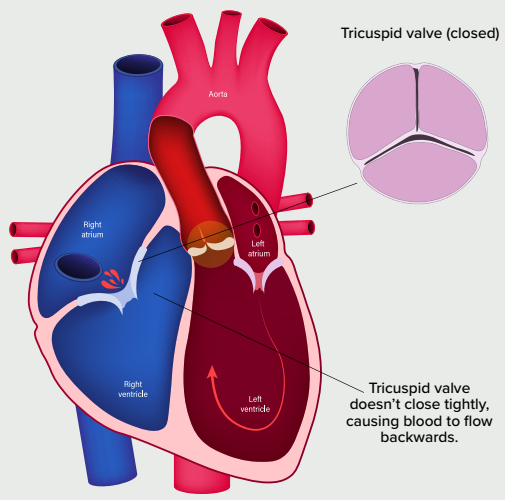
Dr. Sawaya says, “We are constantly striving to push the boundaries of what is possible in cardiac care, and our journey in advancing cardiac interventions continues. We remain committed to pioneering technologies that improve patient outcomes and the quality of life.”

◆◆ **This innovative transcatheter therapy offers new hope to patients with tricuspid regurgitation.** ◆◆

### NORMAL TRICUSPID VALVE



### DISEASED VALVE





# Navigating the Fog

## Dementia and Care in Lebanon



Dementia, a term often misunderstood and shrouded in stigma, is increasingly becoming a public health concern in Lebanon as its aging population continues to grow. Beyond the numbers, however, lies a profoundly human story of individuals and families navigating a path marked by challenges, changes, and moments of connection. Through her research and work, Dr. Monique Chaaya, AUB professor at the Department of Epidemiology and Population Health, sheds light on the current landscape of dementia care in Lebanon, offering a window into the challenges and potential pathways forward.

“Dementia is actually an umbrella of disorders and conditions, referred to as a syndrome, characterized by a decline in cognitive functioning serious enough to interfere with daily life,” says Dr. Chaaya. This decline is progressive, marking a gradual deterioration rather than an

abrupt change. Alzheimer’s disease, perhaps the most recognized form of dementia, constitutes about 60 percent of cases, but other types, such as vascular dementia, frontotemporal dementia, and Lewy body dementia, also contribute to the syndrome’s complexity.

Lebanon, with the highest proportion of older adults in the region, faces a significant challenge. Aging is the strongest risk factor for dementia, and with a growing segment of the population entering their senior years, the burden of dementia is an increasing concern. Dr. Chaaya’s research, initiated in 2010, sought to address the glaring gap in data regarding the prevalence and burden of dementia in Lebanon. Through collaboration with international and local experts, her work has been pioneering in establishing a foundational understanding of dementia’s impact in the country.



A critical aspect of Dr. Chaaya’s findings is the caregiving crisis in Lebanon. Most dementia care is informal, resting on the shoulders of family members who often lack the support and resources necessary for this demanding role. The situation is exacerbated by a lack of specialized dementia care centers and the societal tendency to exclude or isolate those living with dementia, further diminishing their quality of life.

Addressing the challenges of dementia in Lebanon requires a

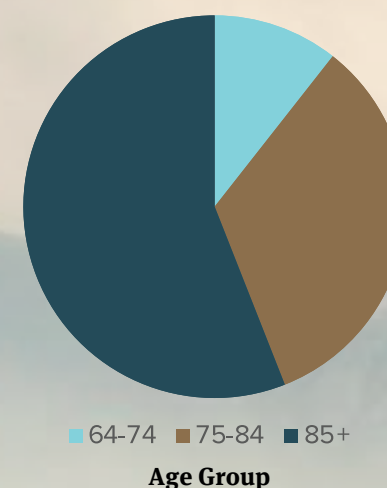
multifaceted approach, integrating public policy, increased accessibility to care, and heightened awareness of the condition. Dr. Chaaya advocates for strengthening geriatric care, the establishment of memory clinics, and the creation of dementia-friendly communities. Moreover, her ongoing research continues to uncover risk factors for dementia, emphasizing the importance of early detection and intervention to improve outcomes for those affected.

Dr. Chaaya’s engagement with dementia is not solely academic; it is also profoundly personal.

As a caregiver to her mother living with dementia, she brings a unique perspective to her work, underscoring the importance of maintaining dignity and promoting social inclusion for those living with the condition. “I’m a caregiver. I have support at home, but I’m a very close caregiver to my mom, who has been there for five years . . . it’s a lot of work. It’s not easy, but at least she’s still with us,” says Dr. Chaaya. Her dedication to the cause is a testament to the profound impact that personal experience can have on driving forward research and advocacy.

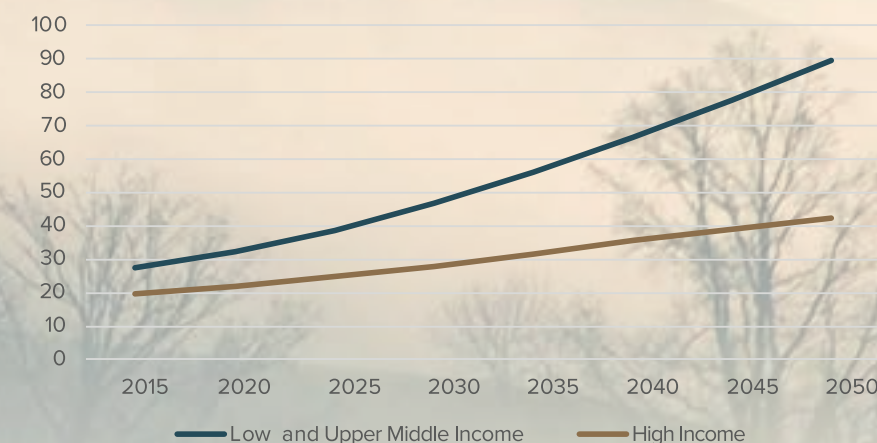
♦♦ In Lebanon, we have the highest proportion of older adults in the region... when you have that number of older adults, you worry about diseases such as dementia. ♦♦

Rates of Dementia in Lebanon by Age



Source: (Phung et al. 2017)

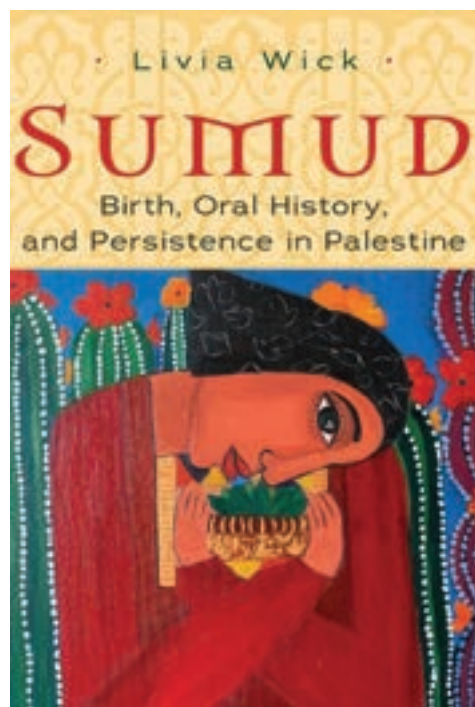
Projected Growth of Dementia by Countries’ Income (millions)



Source: World Alzheimer Report



# Published & Produced



## Sumud

Written by Livia Wick (Faculty)  
*Book*

Wick chronicles oral histories and examines the historical development of medical infrastructure related to childbirth in Palestine, revealing how shifts from centralized to decentralized caregiving have empowered women in public discourse.



## Westerly Breath

The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Composed by Hamed Sinno (BFA '11)  
*Performance*

Hamed Sinno's experimental opera, performed at the Temple of Dendur in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, interweaves mythology, personal memoir, and reflections on migration and immigration through the narrative of Osiris and Sinno's experiences as a musician and advocate.

## Other works:



**The War Injured Child**  
Edited by Ghassan Abu-Sittah (Faculty) and Jamal J. Hoballah  
*Book*



**The Best of Afghan Cooking**  
Written by Zarghuna S. Adel (MA '83)  
*Cookbook*



**The Practice of Sleep Medicine Around the World**  
Edited by Hrayr Pierre Attarian (BS '88, MD '92) and Alain Michel Sabri (BS '88, MD '92)  
*Book*



**Epilepsy Surgery**  
Written by Aline Herlopian (BS '04, MD '08)  
*Book*



**Armenian Ethnographic Insights**  
Written by Dr. Hrayr Jebejian (MS '84)  
*Book*

## CADENZA IN SNOW WHITE

A small figure looms over there  
where, you ask?  
There!

A shift of brilliance atop the hill  
the figure, porcelain? Glass? Ceramic?  
All that we know; a pearlescent glare.

Slowly balancing, dancing between sides  
Apostatizing snowflakes swinging to and fro  
A chaos, a harmony in destruction  
A eulogy writ through light and snow  
A remembrance of affront against something

Crass copper lodging in your head  
as of gods who's in? who's not.  
Do you hear it, the whistle?

A tender caress of wind  
A blood-red dye  
And iron rusts the air

The rondo choir finishes  
the cloud mist lifts  
and that shine remains

there

After the skin turns blue  
after the snow's un-dyed  
the figure still looms over

shining

there.

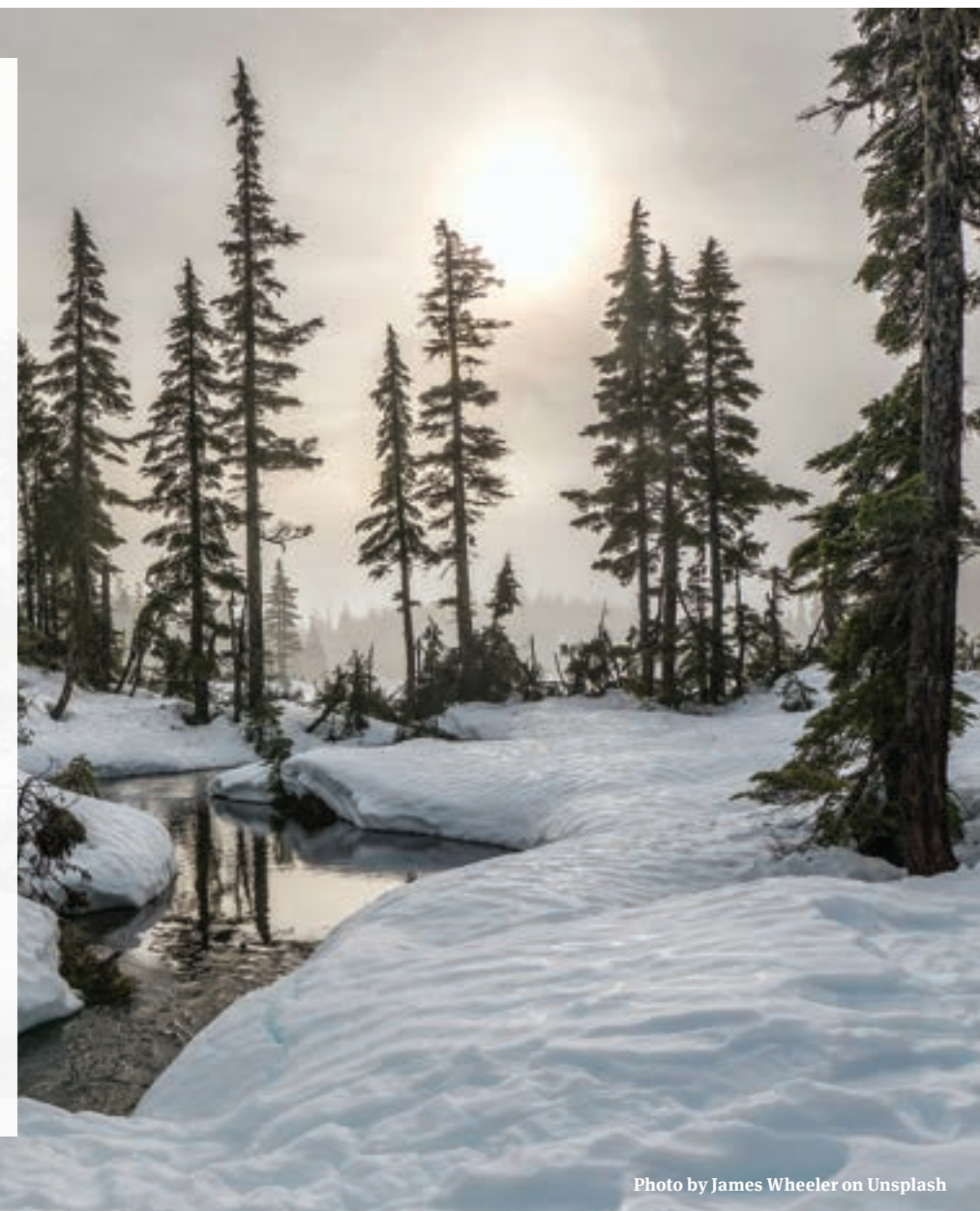


Photo by James Wheeler on Unsplash

# Creative Minds

Featuring Original Works  
from the American University  
of Beirut Community



## Cadenza in Snow White by Hadi Hakam

**Hadi Hakam** is a current graduate student in English literature. His poem is inspired by Michael James Dennison's *The Submerged Mind*, whose utilization of weaponry caused him to reflect on how hopefulness can be a deadly vice.



# Introducing Four Alumni Social Media Influencers

For more than 155 years, our alumni have been “influencers.” In recent years, a growing number of them have established a name for themselves on various social media platforms. We got in touch with four AUB alumni to find out about their experience at AUB and their role as influencers.



**NEMR ABOU NASSAR**  
(BBA '05)  
Media, politics

@NEMRCOMEDY  
Instagram: **136K** followers  
Facebook: **148K** followers  
X: **119.7K** followers

**How did AUB help prepare you to become the influencer you are today?**

Whenever someone asks me what they should study to be a comedian—or an entertainer of any kind—I always say, “Get a business degree.” No matter how talented you are, you need to build the machine to deliver your talent to the world. AUB taught me how to put the machine together.

**Who at AUB influenced you?**

Dr. Assem Safieddine (a professor of finance) and Dr. Tarek Kettaneh (retired senior lecturer) were both huge influences in finance and venture capital, respectively, but they taught a lot more than that. I was also influenced by a lecture by a guest speaker that I heard during a philosophy class during my sophomore year. This speaker was touring the world talking about how love was the answer to hate. I asked her, “If love is natural to all beings, shouldn’t we be more concerned with teaching how to hate instead of how to love?”

**What is the most important thing you do as an influencer?**

Succeed. To truly influence, all you need to do is succeed so others can see that it’s worth betting and investing in yourself.



**SARAH BEYDOUN**  
(BA Sociology and Anthropology '94)  
Design, women’s empowerment

@sarahsbag  
Instagram: **161K** followers  
Photo credit: Johanne Issa

**How did AUB help prepare you to become the influencer you are today?**

Attending AUB was a transformative experience. As a student of sociology, I found myself captivated by my courses, finding profound resonance in Feminism 101, which instilled in me an unwavering belief in the imperative of women’s financial autonomy and productivity. Sarah’s Bag is not just about fashion, it’s a vehicle for empowering women financially, fostering their independence, and dismantling societal limitations.

**Who at AUB influenced you?**

Dr. Patricia Nabti (former professor of anthropology), an American scholar with an unparalleled grasp of the Middle East, left a strong impression on me. I vividly recall the challenge she set before us, an exercise where we were tasked with memorizing the contours of the entire Arab region and then sketching it freehand.

**What is the most important thing you do as an influencer?**

Inspire. I want current and future generations to be inspired by Sarah’s Bag and to know that a business’s compass should not solely fixate on profit; it should be guided by a “moral North,” a social mission that drives every aspect of its existence.



**KHALED GHATTASS**  
(MS Chemistry '07, PhD Cell and Molecular Biology '13)  
Science, research

@dr.khaledghattass  
Instagram: **1.6M** followers  
Facebook: **1.3 M** followers

**How did AUB help prepare you to become the influencer you are today?**

I traveled an interesting path to get to where I am now. It all started at AUB, where I began as a chemistry major, then switched to biology and then to clinical research. My life choices are motivated by the desire to touch people’s lives. That’s always been my goal. I owe most of what I am now to AUB, where I was provided with the space I needed to express who I am. Being at AUB was a mind-shifting experience.

**Who at AUB influenced you?**

Professor Makhlof Haddadin (long-time professor of chemistry who passed away in 2022) was one of my earliest inspirations. I felt my brain expanding in his organic chemistry class and experienced the sheer joy of acquiring knowledge. There were others—my PhD adviser, Hala Muhtasib (professor of biology), and Marwan Sabban (also professor of biology), who is still a mentor and a friend.

**What is the most important thing you do as an influencer?**

Make people pause in these times and make them feel that they are not alone.



**MAYA NASSAR**  
(BA Sociology and Anthropology '07)  
Health, fitness

@mayanassarfitness  
Instagram: **283K** followers

**How did AUB prepare you to become the influencer you are today?**

It was at AUB that I learned important personal skills like how to present in public, how to speak my mind, and how to be fearless and to pursue my goals. At AUB, I was also exposed to many people of different nationalities, cultures, and backgrounds.

**Who at AUB influenced you?**

Dr. Jeremy Koons (former philosophy professor), Dr. David Wrisley (former English professor), and Dr. Abeer Hamdan (former English professor) taught me many practical skills that I still use today in my professional life.

**What is the most important thing you do as an influencer?**

Make a difference in someone’s life. Fitness changed my life for the better in every possible way. I like to use my story to show others that if I can do it, then they can do it too. I use my online platform, my radio show at Virgin Radio Stars, and my gyms to help people become the best version of themselves and live their best life. Knowing that I helped someone live a better life or achieve their goals is just as rewarding as achieving my own goals.







# WAAAUB Alumni Chapter Elections



Marc Metni

## Agricultural and Food Sciences

President: Marc Metni (BS Agriculture '77, MS Food Technology '81)  
Vice President: Ghassan A. Sayigh (BS Agriculture '78)  
Treasurer: Cecilia Usayran Shami (BS Agriculture '78, MS Food Technology '81)  
Secretary: Najah Jaroush Abdouni (BS Agriculture '80)  
Members at Large: Alia Youssef Mosbah Alameddine (BS Agriculture '04, MS Soil Science '07), Nadine El Khoury (BS Agriculture '94), Mustapha Haidar (BS Agriculture '77, MS Irrigation '80), Nadim Khoury (BS Agriculture '79, MS Irrigation '82), Nassim M. Njeim (BS Agriculture '12), Youssef B. Saade (BS Agriculture '20)



Widad Abou-Chaar

## Midwest Chapter

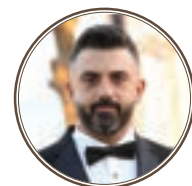
President: Widad Abou-Chaar (BS Biology '11, MD '15)  
Vice President: Nahla Merhi (BS Biology '92, MD '96)  
Treasurer: Tammam Nehme (BS Biology '93, MD '97)  
Secretary: Omar Nehme (BS Biology '90)  
Members at Large: Nadine Ghanem (BBA '09), Ara Tekian (BS Biology and Chemistry '75, MS Neuroanatomy '79, PhD Neuroscience '81), Madeleine Yehia (BS Biology '13)



Omer El Salhani

## Turkey Chapter

President: Omer El Salhani (BBA '17)  
Vice President: Samer Sinno (BE Computer and Communications Engineering '92)  
Treasurer: Chirine El Baba (BS Biology '06, TD Teaching of Science '07)  
Secretary: Tarek Hassan (BE Electrical Engineering '94)  
Member at Large: Alaa Kabalan (BFA Graphic Design '09)



Mohamad Yatim

## Ivory Coast Chapter

President: Mohamad Yatim (BE Civil Engineering '11, ME Engineering Management '17)  
Vice President: Mirna Daher (BS Geology '93)  
Treasurer: Mohamad Omeish (BE Mechanical Engineering '11)  
General Secretary: Rania Saab (BFA Graphic Design '99)  
Members at Large: Abdul Rahman Al Rifai (BA Political Studies '18), Vahe Seropian (BE Civil Engineering '92)



# Recognizing Exceptional Work in Advancement



Salma Dannawi Oueida, associate vice president for development, alumni relations, and university events at AUB, was recently selected for the prestigious 2024 CASE Asia-Pacific Distinguished Service Award in recognition of “outstanding institutional leadership and exceptional work in advancement.” An alumna (BE Electrical and Computer Engineering '92, EMBA '22) and the wife and mother of AUB alumni, Oueida is deeply committed to her alma mater and is a powerful champion for the advancement profession. “I am passionate about my work,” she explains. “This is rooted in my unwavering commitment to the transformative power and importance of education.” Oueida says that it is a privilege to work at AUB, an institution that “is not only known for its deep roots in the Middle East but also for its impact and its resilience.”

Oueida has played a critical role in the success of the BOLDLY AUB campaign, which concluded on June 30, 2024, and has led many initiatives at AUB in support of its priorities: working with alumni, friends, and volunteer groups to raise funds for scholarships, research, and facilities on campus, including for the medical center, and much more. She has a special place in her heart, though, for the Zaki Nassif Program for Music, which she helped establish in 2004. The program, which was launched to commemorate the memory of Zaki Nassif, organizes activities at AUB, in Lebanon, and in the region to encourage and promote an appreciation of the music of Zaki Nassif and other musical luminaries. “The goal,” Oueida remembers, “was to ensure that this music would always be a part of our lives.” It was in part because of her success at “developing an idea that was vague, initially, into

a very active program” that Oueida received the President’s Service Excellence Award in 2010.

Commenting on the CASE award, Senior Vice President for Advancement and Business Development Imad Baalbaki says, “AUB has overcome many challenges in recent years. We made it because of dedicated, determined, talented people who were at the helm of this institution and who embodied the mission of AUB and its core values. Salma Dannawi Oueida is one of those few people.”

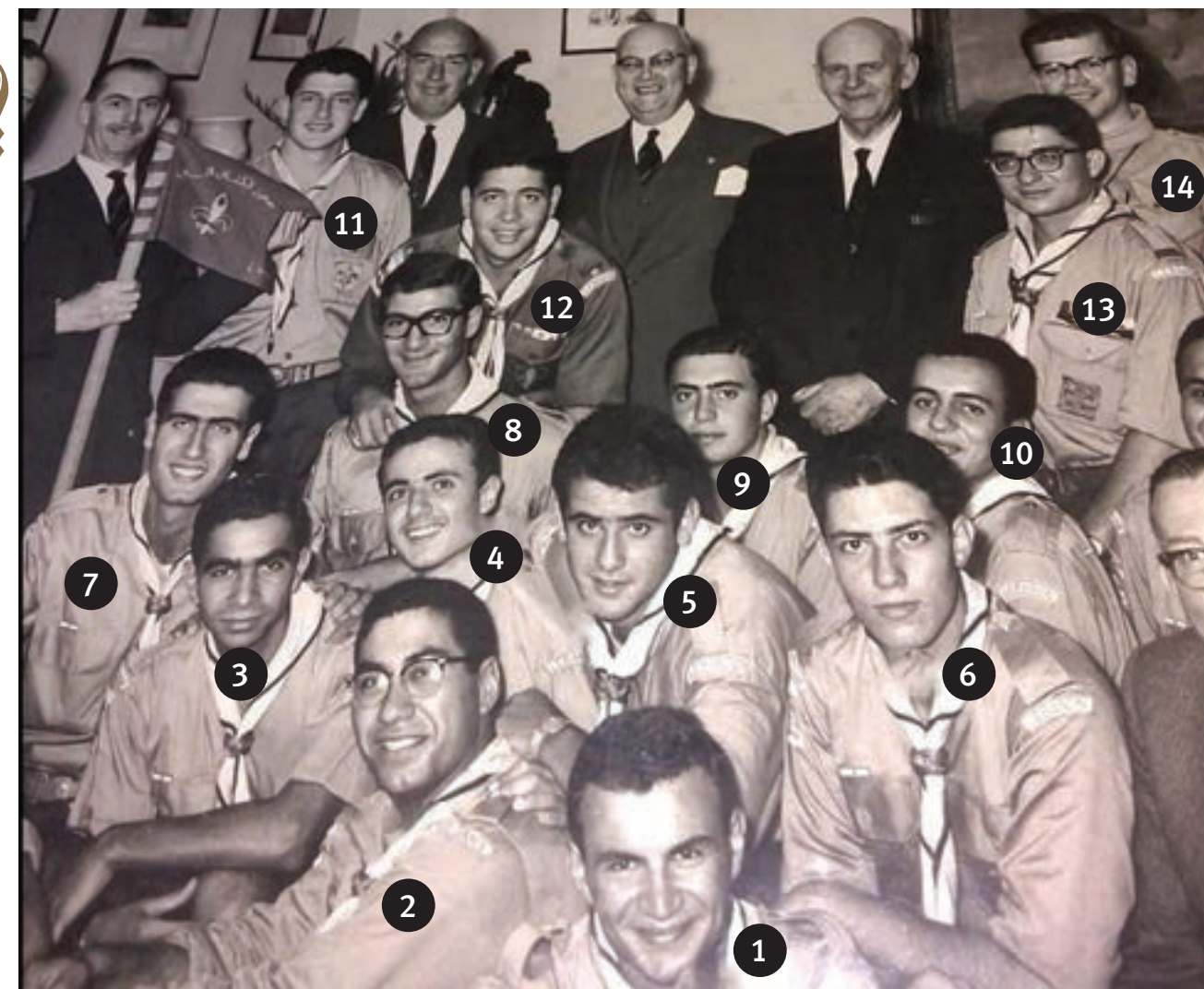
♦♦ **Oueida is deeply committed to her alma mater and is a powerful champion for the advancement profession.** ♦♦



# Class Notes

## 1960s

**Fawwaz Ulaby (BS Physics '64)** writes, "I came to AUB from IC, where I was a member of B4, the boy scout troop affiliated with IC, from 1958 to 1961. I was one of a group of 10 AUB students who continued to serve as scout leaders for B4. In summer 1962, after our first year at AUB, we joined four B4 scout leaders from our IC days and got on a ship in Beirut to travel to Marseille in France. From there, we continued by a combination of trains and boats to London in the UK. In London, we visited and stayed for a week at Baden-Powell House (now called the Queen's Gate House), which was named for Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of scouting. This photo was taken during that most memorable trip."



1-Nabil Kronfol (BS General '65, MD '69), 2-Tony Aneed, 3-Fawwaz Ulaby (BS Physics '64), 4-Majed Shehadeh (BA Economics '66), 5-Youssef Samaha (BA Economics '69), 6-Nadim Abdelmalek, 7-Ziad Deeb (BS General '65, MD '69), 8-Issam Shammas, 9-Ziad Idriss (BS General '66, MD '70), 10-Samir Idriss, 11-Aref Farra (BBA '66, MBA '69), 12-Hisham Khartabile (BA Economics '66), 13-Rabi Suleiman (BS General '64, MD '68), 14-Walid Moubarak



Front row (left to right): Phil Hedrick, Mary (Munson) Schnittker, Kent Willis, Jan (White) Carlsson-Bull, Warren Wiggins  
Back row (left to right): Sadie Marie (Clark) King, Anne Krohn Graham, Laura (Finch) Ziady, Carol Ann (Patlan) Minarick, Judy (Sinniger) Mantler, Charlotte Helmbold Sheard

**Phil Hedrick (JYA 1962-63),** writes, "I was part of a junior year abroad (JYA) group (see photo top left) at AUB and what was then called the Beirut College for Women (now LAU) in 1962-63. Our year in Beirut, Lebanon, and in the Middle East changed our lives. We particularly remember the excellent professors we had, including Charles Malik (moral philosophy), Zeine Zeine (history of the Ottoman Empire), and Carl George (genetics and ecology). We have gotten together several times by Zoom recently. Four of us got together for an in-person 'reunion' in Lake Okoboji, Iowa, in summer 2023 (see second photo bottom left). Jan and Warren joined us remotely."



left to right: Kent Willis, Anne Krohn Graham, Laura (Finch) Ziady, Phil Hedrick



## 1970s

**Tarek Kettaneh (BE Engineering '70)** writes, “After teaching entrepreneurship courses at OSB for 20 years, I have retired to southern Spain where I occasionally consult on family business issues. Our three sons are all IC and AUB graduates and live in Los Angeles (Makram), Qatar (Kamal), and Madrid (Talal).”

**Sharon Williams Van Rooij (Williams) (MA General '70)** writes, “Retirement? Not for me! Although I’ve retired from my full-time faculty position at George Mason University, I’m still receiving requests from journals to review articles, still facilitating a module in Mason’s Executive Development program, still keeping up with trends in the labor market and how those trends affect the L&D field, still connecting with former corporate colleagues from days gone by, and plunging into AI applications as they impact how we work. So, I’m officially announcing my unretirement and am now available for freelance projects.”

recently appointed by the United Nations Development Programme as the UNDP Live Lebanon Goodwill Ambassador for Art and Development to advance and accelerate development work through art.



**Hrayr Jebejian (MS Agricultural Economics '84)**, DMin, writes, “After AUB, I completed my doctorate degree in theology from New York Theological University. Presently, I am the general secretary of the Bible Society in the Gulf and based in Kuwait. I have now published four books (three in Armenian and one in English) and also contributed academic papers to many academic journals and encyclopedias. I am married to **Dr. Arda Boynerian-Jebejian (MA English Literature '99)**. We have two children and one granddaughter.”



**Dina Bayoud Kohl (BA Political Studies and Public Administration '85)** writes, “I met my German husband in Beirut. In 1987, we relocated to Bavaria, Germany, where we raised our two children. Because of my passion for Lebanese cuisine, I have taught cooking lessons at the Volkshochschule, an esteemed adult education institution, since 1995. Recognizing the significance of preserving our rich culinary heritage, I authored a cookbook, *The Taste of Marjeyoun* (also *Le goût de Marjeyoun*) in 2015, the first to focus on the regional cuisine of Marjeyoun in southern Lebanon, which is available in Lebanon. I have also been teaching classical Arabic at the University of Regensburg since 2011.”



**Wadad El Housseini (BA Sociology '88, TD '90, MA Educational Psychology '94)** writes, “I am grateful and happy for my AUB experience, which shaped my knowledge and skills and enabled me to join Qatar University as a consultant to the VP of student affairs. I am grateful also for the professional development I have gained at QU. I am now chair of the 2024 MENASA conference for student affairs organized by NASPA, the leading association for student affairs personnel in the world, hosted by Qatar University. My two-year term as MENASA director began in April 2024.”

## 1980s



**Lena Kelekian (BS Geology '81)**, DST, PhD, is an internationally renowned visual artist, environmental designer, and art therapist. She is the winner of two Olympic Fine Arts gold medals at both the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics and the London 2012 Summer Olympics. Lena (seen in the photo above on the left) was



**Roula Douglas (Azar) (BS Biology '89)** defended her doctoral thesis in the humanities, specializing in information and communication sciences, at Saint Joseph University on March 12, 2024. Following her defense, she was awarded the highest distinction, *summa cum laude*, with congratulations from the examination committee. Her dissertation, “The Lebanese Press through the Gender Prism: From the Visible to the Invisible,” represents a significant contribution to the field.

## 1990s



After earning a PhD in physical chemistry at Boston College in 1997, **Lina Shebaro Germann (BS Chemistry '90)** moved to Santa Fe, where she is a STEM educator and advocate and an active community member. In 2016, Lina founded a 501(c)3 nonprofit, STEM Santa Fe, which has received multiple awards. Moreover, she is the recipient of the 2023 STEM Equity and Inclusion Award and the winner of the 2022 Mentor of the Year for New Mexico Excellence in STEM. In November 2023, Lina was elected for a six-year term as a member of the Governing Board of Santa Fe Community College.

**Roula Abdel-Massih (BS Biology '96, MS Biology '98)** writes, “With degrees from AUB and the University of Glasgow (PhD), academia has been a cherished part of my life. For nearly two decades, I had the privilege of being a faculty member at the University of Balamand, nurturing future scholars. Since moving to Michigan, I’ve embraced the incredible community in the tri-city area while raising four wonderful children with my husband. I was recently selected as one of the 100 International Science Council (ISC) Fellows, a recognition I attribute to the support of TWAS (The World Academy of Sciences), TWAS Young Affiliates Network (TYAN), and the ISC.”



**Ihab Tabbara (BBA '96)** writes, “I had the incredible opportunity of delivering my TEDx talk at AUB on March 9, 2023. The experience was utterly overwhelming and exhilarating! In my talk, “Struggle, Seeds, Success after 40,” I delve into the empowering concept that failures are not setbacks but stepping stones to success. It underscores the significance of self-belief and the bravery required to step out of one’s comfort zone. The key message is clear: your time is NOW. This talk serves as a powerful reminder that perseverance, along with a positive mindset, can lead to extraordinary achievements.”

## Partnerships for AUB

The Palestinian Students Fund (PSF) has been supporting individual AUB students since 1973, more than 50 years ago. In 2010, AUB and PSF established a formal partnership that has opened doors and made dreams come true for almost 200 Palestinian students who have received scholarships totaling more than \$2.3 million. In addition to providing financial support, PSF

also organizes career guidance and counseling, life skills training, and other assistance that students might need to ensure that they can take full advantage of a university education. Alumna Wafa El Yassir (BBA '78), who is general director of PSF, says, “PSF believes that joining AUB is the best opportunity that a Palestinian refugee youth can have. AUB provides students with a quality

education and the skills they need. It also encourages personal development. AUB graduates are empowered, outspoken, and self-confident. That is why we partner with AUB.”



**Palestinian Students Fund**





**Wael Khoury (BA Psychology '98)** writes, “After graduating from AUB, I moved to the US, first to New York City, then to Florida, where I got my master’s in human resources, and finally to Tennessee. In 2008, my wife and I moved to Doha, Qatar, where I have worked with EY, S.H. Al Mana, Deloitte, and Ooredoo Group. In February 2024, I started my own consulting firm, Lopez Khoury & Associates, specializing in human resources, organizational development, and change management. We have five kids, still live in Qatar, and visit Lebanon almost yearly.”

**Nisreen Jabr (BA Elementary Education '99, Diploma Educational Leadership '00)** writes, “I currently reside in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, where I have embarked on a fulfilling career as an ESL instructor. To further expand my expertise, I have recently achieved my Ontario Certified Teacher designation. I am also working toward becoming an Ontario Certified English Language Teacher. Passionate about teaching and enriching the lives of others, I am grateful for the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of my students.”



## 2000S

**Saad El Dawi (BBA '04)** writes, “20 years have passed since my graduation! In addition to a BBA, I earned an MS in marketing management from EDHEC Business School in France in 2010. During my career, I have worked in the Middle East, Europe, and West Africa in a number of fields including furniture, chemicals, and agro-industry. I am married to an AUB alumna, **Ghida Gaussin (BBA '09)**. We have two kids. AUB played an important role in my life, especially when it comes to personal growth. I wish one day to see my kids graduating from AUB.”

**Aram Kradjian (BE Mechanical Engineering '05)** is a seasoned executive in technology and strategy currently serving as senior director of strategy and powertrain at Garrett Motion HQ, Switzerland. He was previously director of research and innovation at Jaguar Land Rover in the UK. Aram’s career also includes roles as a visiting professor at King’s College London and a management consultant at Roland Berger. He also holds an MBA from INSEAD and an MS in production systems engineering from RWTH Aachen University of Technology. Aram is passionate about innovation, technology, and clean energy. His hobbies include running and astronomy.



**Maria Frangieh (MA Economics '07)**, PhD, is a successful and visionary entrepreneur. She was awarded the Marketing 2.0 Influencer Award 2022 and the Great Companies Women Entrepreneur Award 2023. Maria is the founder and CEO of Socialprise, an award-winning digital marketing, training, and communications agency; Watani Initiative, which helps Lebanese businesses to grow and export their products; Working Remotely Tools, an affiliate marketing website helping people work remotely more efficiently; Plan Ahead Calendar, showcasing digital calendars to help businesses never miss an event; and Shop the Twist, an online marketplace and trading business offering SMEs access to big markets.

**Samar Akkou (BBA '08)** writes, “With all of life’s ups and downs, I am blessed to be where I am today. In March 2020, I moved to Dubai, a place that I now call home, where I am surrounded by my immediate family and my soon-to-be husband. I work at Majid Al Futtaim as senior manager of leasing. In 2014, I became the first woman in the Middle East to achieve the CSM designation at the young age of 26! I have adopted education as part of my contribution to this industry, sharing my knowledge and expertise with the upcoming generations.”



## 2010S



**Ryan Zahr (BE Electrical and Computer Engineering '10)** writes, “I have been living in Melbourne since 2017 and am currently working as a technical director with Mott MacDonald, where I lead multidisciplinary engineering teams for the design of buildings and precincts. I’ve got an adorable two-and-a-half-year-old son, who is the joy of my life. In my free time, I enjoy dancing salsa—a hobby I was introduced to in 2009 when I was a member of the AUB Latino Dance Club, which is still going strong! I’m also a Latin DJ and vinyl collector!”

**Racha Abou Chahine (MSN Nursing Administration and Management '11)** writes, “I am currently the director of quality and risk management at Fakeeh University Hospital in the UAE. With an additional master’s degree in applied research, international certification in CPHQ, and a fellowship in ISQua, I am committed to making a difference. I am currently pursuing a doctorate in business administration. Reflecting on AUB’s nurturing of a curious mind and lifelong learning mindset, I am grateful for the foundation it provided. This ethos continues to drive my pursuit of excellence and innovation in healthcare management, as I strive to positively impact the world.”



**El Zahraa Majed (BS Medical Laboratory Sciences '13, MPH '15)** writes, “I am excited to announce that I have successfully defended my PhD in health promotion from Queen’s University in Canada!”



**Samer Al Halteh (BA Public Administration '14)** writes, “My time at AUB was marred by personal tragedy when I lost my father during my second semester. This loss nearly shattered my resolve to continue my studies, but the thought of fulfilling my father’s dream for me to graduate from AUB gave me the strength to persevere. It was not an easy journey, but one that taught me the true meaning of resilience. Since graduating from AUB, I have taken the helm of our family business, CGFX. On a personal note, 2022 marked the beginning of a new chapter in my life as I married my better half, Joelle. We are expecting our first child this September.”

**Nicolas Hawat (BS Computer Science '14)** writes, “It has been a decade since my graduation from AUB. I have enjoyed a rewarding career in trading software with Murex and BP, as well as some entrepreneurial experiences a few years ago when I was still in Lebanon. I am currently based in London and am transitioning to a digital nomad lifestyle. I’ve launched my own venture, Start Me Up Ai, dedicated to providing reliable tech solutions to start-ups and businesses. Leveraging AI, I aim to help entities overcome tech challenges and achieve their goals. I’m constantly learning and adapting to ensure my clients receive top-tier, future-ready applications.”





**Amir R. Kamra (BS Construction Engineering ’14)** writes, “After 10 years of working as an engineer and consultant in Dubai, I decided to pursue my lifelong passion and moved to Paris to join Le Cordon Bleu Paris, where I am pursuing my Grand Diplôme® in Cuisine and Pâtisserie. I currently sit for exams in the kitchen, but I truly miss Bechtel Wing D and Nicely 500 exam halls! Thanks to AUB and MSFEA, which taught me to be curious, experiment, and push my boundaries, I am able to achieve any goal I want in life! As a globetrotter, I am on a journey to travel to 100 countries by 2027. I have visited 54 countries so far.”



**Khoudor Keniar (BE Mechanical Engineering ’13, ME Mechanical Engineering ’14)** writes, “After graduation, I moved to Atlanta, Georgia, to attend Georgia Tech, where I earned my PhD in 2020. Currently, I live in California with my wife. I work on accelerating society’s transition to sustainable energy by enabling EVs at Tesla. I am extremely grateful to AUB for everything it taught me and for some of the long-lasting friendships with colleagues and mentors.”



**Talal Chami (MS Media Studies ’15)** is a Colombian-born Lebanese and an accomplished media strategist with extensive experience in the MENA region. A published author, blogger, and avid regional analyst and researcher, Talal recently published *Improvisation/s—On-Peppermint Frappé-For-Munich-1972 Vol.1*. He is the founder of The Axles of My Wagon Wheels blog, where he publishes short-loops in one-act, an innovative fiction concept of his own creation. He is an editorial board member of Wendigo.co, a literary journal/platform founded to publish exciting, inventive, and diverse authors and stories. He is also an editorial team member of Liberum, a platform of uncensored ideas and stories that do not necessarily make it to mainstream media.



2020S



**Mariam Rakka (BE Computer and Communications Engineering ’20)** writes, “Four years after graduating from AUB, I find myself amidst Arizona’s breathtaking Cardiac Canyon sand rock formations. The creativity embedded in these natural wonders evokes a nostalgic echo of my undergraduate days at AUB. Here, amidst the rugged beauty, I rediscover the same spirit of exploration and innovation that thrived within AUB’s creative corridors. Each rock formation tells a story of resilience and adaptation, reminiscent of the challenges we faced and conquered during our academic journey—a testament to the enduring impact of AUB’s nurturing environment, guiding us to seek inspiration in every corner of the world.”

**Oday Salman (BS Biology ’16, MD ’20)** writes, “Since graduating from medical school, I have been on an exciting journey, initially spending two years at the AUBMC Department of Emergency Medicine honing my skills in a high-pressure environment. My passion for research then led me to the University of Pennsylvania, where I focused on translational cardiovascular research, mainly in genomics and proteomics of heart failure and arterial stiffness, which has been both challenging and exceedingly rewarding. I’ve recently started a new chapter by matching into a categorical internal medicine residency in the US, ready to further my commitment to improving healthcare outcomes, both clinically and academically.”



**Israa Azzam (ME Mechanical Engineering ’21)** writes, “After completing my ME degree, I joined the Purdue University School of Engineering Technology (SOET) as a visiting scholar. This experience inspired me to enroll in Purdue’s PhD program in mechanical engineering technology. Currently, I am a research assistant on the NSF-funded project Research Initiation: Developing Spatial Visualization and Understanding of Complex Systems via Interactive Mixed Reality Modules. I lead research on improving cognitive skills and training experiences by developing

extended reality (XR) platforms. I have received recognition for my contributions, including the 2024 Bravo Award for Employee Recognition and induction into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.”

**Marwa Aboumourad (MS Evolutionary Biology ’22)** writes, “I have embarked on a thrilling journey in Cancun, Mexico, alongside my husband and our two adventurous kids. Amidst the beauty of the Riviera Maya, I’m also diving deep into the realm of knowledge, pursuing a PhD program in evolutionary biology at Wayne State University. Exciting times indeed, as we explore the wonders of the world while unraveling the mysteries of science. I am grateful for the foundation laid at AUB, shaping both my personal and professional endeavors.”

**Christian Dagher (RESDT ’22)** writes, “After completing my OBGYN residency at AUBMC, I embarked to Lyon, France, for advanced training at the *Hospices Civils de Lyon*. This enriching experience paved the way for my subsequent move to the US, where I commenced a two-year research fellowship in GYN oncology at the prestigious Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Simultaneously, I was accepted to Weill Cornell Medicine, where I am pursuing a master’s degree in clinical epidemiology and health services research. My recent match into an OBGYN program marks a significant milestone, aligning with my aspiration to specialize further in GYN oncology in the United States.”



**Cynthia Antossian (MS Chemistry ’23)** writes, “After graduating from AUB, I moved to Zurich, Switzerland, in October. I am currently pursuing a PhD degree in environmental sciences at the Institute for Atmospheric and Climate Science at ETH Zurich. I am also working as a doctoral researcher in the field of atmospheric chemistry and performing experiments to better understand the physico-chemical properties of organic aerosol particles during photolytic and oxidant-driven aging processes.”



**Ghinwa Fayyad (BA Media and Communications ’23)** writes, “I am currently doing a master’s in creative direction, content, and branding at IE University in Madrid! I am also the class representative for my class of 2023–24. I’ll be graduating in July!”



# In Memoriam

## Alumni



**Leila Shaheen da Cruz**  
(BA Biology '47)

**Leila Shaheen da Cruz (BA Biology '47)**, passed away on November 4, 2023. She was the daughter of Nikula Jirjis Shahin, physics professor at AUB (1939–62), and Hanneh Khoury and the sister of Najwa (BA '51) and Mona (BA '59) Shaheen. While editor of *Al-Kulliyah*, she met her husband, Daniel da Cruz Jr. (d. 1991). As managing director of Illustrated Publications, she translated DC Comics into Arabic, including Lulu and Tabboush, Superman, Spiderman, and Batman, distributing them throughout

the Middle East. She later started her own publishing company, INTAG. Leila held leadership positions on the World YWCA Executive Committee and as national president of the Lebanon YWCA. A lifelong supporter of AUB, Leila served on the Alumni Club Executive Committee and as a Women's Auxiliary volunteer at the Bargain Box until the age of 90. Leila is survived by her children, Lina Lenore and Daniel Nicholas, and four grandchildren.



**Malak Nahas Dagher**  
(BA Education '56,  
MA Education '73)

**Malak Nahas Dagher (BA Education '56, MA Education '73)** passed away on January 27, 2024. She was born in Saida, Lebanon, on March 27, 1929. She is survived by her devoted husband, Dr. Fuad Joseph Dagher (BA '54, MD '58); their children, Joe, Azar, and William; six grandchildren; and a great-grandchild. Malak was an educator who dedicated her life to the pursuit of knowledge and was passionate about imparting it to others.

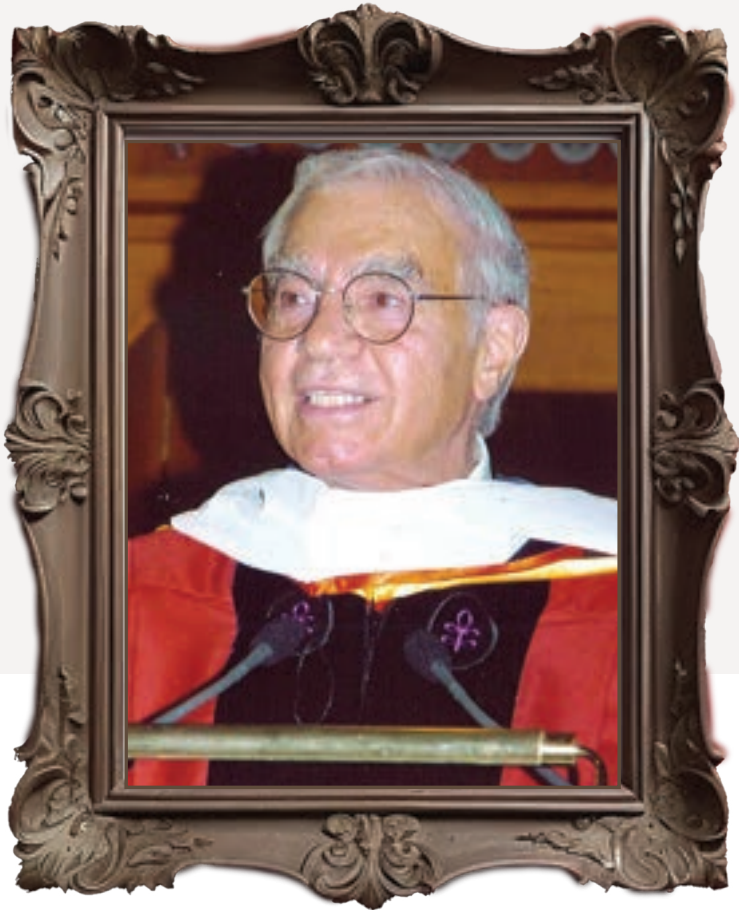
While her husband, Fuad, was serving as chief of staff at AUBMC in the 1990s, she volunteered helping the librarian at the Saab Medical Library. She traveled extensively with her husband, studying the cultures and making friends the world over. An early pioneer of women's rights and a tireless champion for social justice causes, Malak left an indelible mark on her community. Her legacy will live on in the hearts of her family, friends, and all those whose lives she touched.



**Abdallah G. Dahir**  
(BS Agricultural  
Engineering '57)

**Abdallah G. Dahir (BS Agricultural Engineering '57)** passed away on December 19, 2023, at the age of 91. He was born in Kaftoun, Al Koura, Lebanon, on September 22, 1932. Abdallah, who attended Bishmizzine High School, earned a PhD in applied mechanics at Michigan State University in 1964. He had a long and successful career at IBM and was a pioneer

in the technology and telecommunication field. He retired as vice president of engineering at MCI. He is survived by his wife, Nancy Dahir; his four children, George, Alida, Samira, and Tarik; his six grandchildren, Scout, Piper, Beckett, Jackson, Nicholas, and Olivia; and his sister, Sana Karam.



# Dr. Richard A. Debs

♦♦ Among the very greatest board chairs of AUB's 158 years and among the most influential since its founding.♦♦

Chairman Emeritus Richard A. Debs passed away on January 28, 2024. He was a towering figure at the American University of Beirut, a university that he served as trustee (since 1976) and later as board chairman (1994–2005). He was recognized for his singular contributions to the university, receiving both the University Medal and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters in 2005.

Dr. Debs had an extraordinary career as a lawyer, public servant, government adviser, philanthropist, and published scholar. He was founding president of Morgan Stanley International and chief operating officer of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. He had longstanding involvement in Morgan Stanley, Saudi Arabia, and the Malaysia Fund. Additionally, he served for many years on the board of Mizuho Securities, USA and Mizuho Corporate Bank, USA. Over the years, he worked with IBJ Whitehall Bank, Aubrey G. Lanston & Co., and Gulf International Bank, London, and as an adviser to the Industrial Bank of Japan, Dai-ichi Mutual Life Insurance Company, the Nissho Iwai Corporation, and Bank Julius Baer.

As a philanthropist, Dr. Debs dedicated himself to board service and support for many wide-ranging organizations. He was an ardent supporter of the Bretton Woods Committee, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, ABANA, the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra (founded by Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim), the New-York Historical Society, and many more organizations.

A true music lover, he was also the longest tenured trustee and served as chair of Carnegie Hall, which named the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair in 1999 "in recognition of his generosity and commitment to ensuring a bright future for music."

Dr. Debs graduated *summa cum laude* with a BA from Colgate University (1952), a PhD from Princeton University (1963), and an LLB from Harvard University (1958). He was also a Fulbright Scholar in Egypt. He later returned to Egypt on a joint fellowship from Princeton and Harvard to conduct research that led to the publication of his book *Islamic Law and Civil Code: The Law of Property in Egypt*, published by Columbia University Press, which remains in print to this day.

President Fadlo R. Khuri wrote in the February 29, 2024, President's Perspective, "When the modern history of the university is written, Dick Debs, who drove AUB back from its shell shocked, postwar status into an internationally recognized and admired university, will certainly take his place among the very greatest board chairs of AUB's 158 years and among the most influential since its founding."

Dr. Debs is survived by his wife, Dr. Barbara Knowles Debs; his two children, Elizabeth Anderson Debs and Nicholas Abraham Richard Debs; and his two granddaughters, Isabel Sophia Turner-Debs and Zoe Justine Turner-Debs.



Alumni

**Wadih Jureidini (Bill Jordan) (BS Agriculture '57)**, passed away on February 14, 2024. Wadih grew up in Majdalouna and attended the Gerard Institute in Sidon before enrolling at AUB. After earning his BS degree, he worked briefly in Kuwait and then joined American Cyanamid to manage the Middle East business. When the Lebanese Civil War broke out, Wadih and his family moved to Athens, where they lived for 18 years. They then moved to New Jersey where

Wadih continued to work with American Cyanamid until his retirement. Wadih was a philanthropist who also gave generously of his time and his wisdom. He will be deeply missed by his wife, Trudy; his three children, Christina, Steven, and Patrick and their wives, Kim and Olga; his five grandchildren, Alison, Christopher, Naya, Alexander, and Zachary; and his sister, Isabel—as well as by generations of AUB alumni and friends in North America and around the world.



**Wadih Jureidini  
(Bill Jordan)  
(BS Agriculture '57)**

**John G. Shiber (BS Agriculture '58, MS Biology '61)** passed away on September 21, 2023. He was born in Jerusalem on January 11, 1937, as the youngest of seven children. His family fled Palestine during the Nakba, a pain they carried with them for the rest of their lives. Although John taught briefly at AUB, he spent most of his life and career in the US where he earned a PhD in biology and science education at Purdue University (1973) and

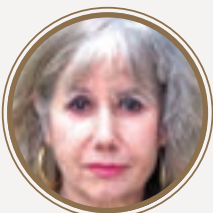
was a professor of biology at the Kentucky Community and Technical College System-Big Sandy (eastern Kentucky) District for more than 25 years. John was an environmental advocate and researcher who published widely and used his fertile imagination to inspire generations of students. He and his wife, Elaine, had two children: Linda-Dalal and Tony-Saba. His family is brokenhearted by his death, but so, so proud to have been a part of his life.



**John G. Shiber  
(BS Agriculture '58,  
MS Biology '61)**

**Arpine Konyalian Grenier (BS Chemistry '65, MS Parasitology '67)**, an Armenian-American poet, musician, and scientist, passed away on January 9, 2024. Born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, Arpine's parents were genocide orphans, respectful of the power of education, music, and religion. She spent her academic and corporate years devoting herself to cardiovascular research, human resources

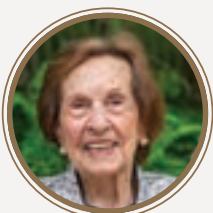
development, regulatory finance, and the arts. She wrote whenever and wherever she could. Her writing was global and cosmic, human rather than ethnic, and appeared in numerous publications, including the *Columbia Poetry Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *Sulfur*, *Kiosk*, *Ararat Quarterly*, *Chiron Review*, and *The Bardian*.



**Arpine Konyalian  
Grenier (BS Chemistry  
'65, MS Parasitology '67),**

**Helen Wadsworth Mugrditchian (MS Food Technology '71)** passed away in New York on September 11, 2023, at the age of 101. She had a lifelong calling to adventure and learning. She also had a great love for the Middle East, particularly for Lebanon. Helen was born in Ogden, Utah, in 1922. She attended Utah State University, where she studied home economics and nutrition. In 1945, after completing an internship in dietetics at New York Hospital, she sailed on the transatlantic liner, the MS Gripsholm, to

the Middle East to work at AUB. In 1951, Helen married Dr. Papken S. Mugrditchian, a prominent thoracic surgeon, and together they raised six daughters. Helen became director of the AUBMC Dietary Department in 1976 and established the first dietetics internship program in the Middle East in 1983. After retiring in 1987, she joined her daughters in the United States, where she spent the next 36 years. She never lost her devotion to Lebanon and the AUB community.



**Helen Wadsworth  
Mugrditchian (MS Food  
Technology '71)**



# Dr. Robert M. Haddad

Dr. Robert M. Haddad, the twelfth president of the American University of Beirut (1993–96), passed away on March 8, 2024, in Orono, Maine. He led AUB during an especially challenging time, immediately following the Lebanese Civil War, and helped to lay the foundations for the university's recovery. In a message to the AUB community, President Fadlo R. Khuri remembered Dr. Haddad as “a strong advocate for what many believe to be the pillars of democracy: the importance of liberal education, freedom of expression, and tolerance of difference.”

He was predeceased by his wife of 56 years, Helen (Rogerson) Haddad, and by his son, George. He is survived by his three daughters, Emily Haddad (John Erikson) of Orono, Maine; Leila Borowsky (Mark) of Needham, Massachusetts; and Josette Haddad (Roderick Ventura) of Rio Rancho, New Mexico; and by his eight grandchildren, Milo, Sonja, Molly Ventura, Philip (Rose), Robert (August), Theo Erikson, Jonathan, and Daniel Borowsky. He also leaves his sister and brother-in-law, Josette and John Generale, and many dear relatives and friends.

Dr. Haddad was born in Brooklyn, New York, on October 1, 1930, the son of the late Nadra and Hadbo (Trabulsi) Haddad. He grew up in Brooklyn and attended PS 127 and Brooklyn Technical High School. He went on to earn a BS in psychology from the University of Pittsburgh (1952), an MA in Near Eastern studies from the University of Michigan (1954), and a PhD in history and Middle Eastern studies from Harvard University (1965). He traveled extensively and conducted research in Europe and the Middle East as a Fulbright Scholar and a Ford Foundation Fellow and on grants from Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

Dr. Haddad came to AUB from Smith College, where he spent most of his career and was a professor of history and religion for 30 years (1963–93). He retired as the Sophia Smith Professor Emeritus of History and Professor Emeritus of Religion and Biblical Literature in 1993. He was the author of numerous publications, including *Syrian Christians in a Muslim Society: An Interpretation* (Princeton University Press, 1970).

♦♦ A strong advocate for what many believe to be the pillars of democracy. ♦♦



## Alumni



**Elliott Nassim Saidi**  
(BBA '76)

**Elliott Nassim Saidi (BBA '76)** was born in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, on July 5, 1951, to a Lebanese father, Alhaji Ibrahim Saidi, and a Nigerian mother, Hajja Fatime Lawan Abdallah. He left Nigeria with his father when he was only four years old to settle in Lebanon, where he was raised by his half brother, Kamel Saidi, and Kamel's wife, Aliya Khalil Saidi. After graduating from AUB, he returned to Nigeria, where he worked in a variety of jobs before saving

enough money to set up a guesthouse in Lagos. Throughout the many years he lived in Nigeria, Elliott stayed in touch with Lebanon and visited the country often—always with a suitcase full of presents. He was a “favorite uncle” for his many great-nieces and great-nephews and quick to support any member of the family in Lebanon—or Nigeria—who needed help. He passed away in Nigeria on December 19, 2022, after a six-year struggle with cancer.

## Friends



**Abdel Aziz Moussa Soueidan**

**Abdel Aziz Moussa Soueidan** passed away on December 5, 2023. He will always be remembered at the American University of Beirut and at many other educational institutions, which benefited from the extraordinary philanthropy of the Association for Specialization and Scientific Guidance (ASSG), which he led for more than 50 years. He was a man of great virtue and nobility, someone who inspired everyone who met him. He devoted his time, energy, and resources

to fostering the success of others. Under Soueidan's attention and care, ASSG and its subsidiaries provided scholarships to more than 4,000 students, enabling them to pursue and complete their educations in Lebanon—and around the world, including in France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, and Switzerland. He will be deeply missed, but never forgotten, by his family and the generations of young men and women who benefited from his extraordinary largesse.



## His Legacy: Wadih Jordan Jureidini

Wadih Jordan Jureidini (BS Agriculture '57) passed away on February 14, 2024. A longtime advocate for his alma mater and a mentor and good friend to generations of AUB students and alumni, Wadih was a pillar of the alumni community in North America, always looking for ways to help, never looking for public recognition. (One of his favorite quotes was “When the choice is between results

and the limelight, I always opt for the first.”) Wadih was also a generous supporter of AUB, where he established the Jamileh Dagher Jureidini Scholarship in 1993 in honor of his mother. To commemorate his life and legacy at the university he loved, his family has established the Wadih Jordan Jureidini Scholarship.





# Rafic Hariri School of Nursing

## Aiducation.

Keen on giving back to his community, Adam El-Harake, a second-year nursing student, found his calling when he arrived at AUB's Rafic Hariri School of Nursing. "I have always harbored a deep-seated desire to contribute to my community and be a pillar of support for people," Adam says.

Adam grew up in relative financial security in the buzzing suburbs of Beirut with his parents and three older siblings. The 2019 economic crisis, however, brought significant challenges. "My father's small business, which was our only source of income, was no longer as profitable," Adam explains. After learning about the numerous scholarship programs at AUB, Adam applied to AUB and was admitted in fall 2022 with a full scholarship. "The scholarship not only secured my spot in the nursing program at AUB, the top educational institution in the country, but also offered the financial support that my family desperately needed."

Adam's outstanding performance and dedication earned him the Rouzan Al Najjar Memorial Award in Nursing in his first year. The Rouzan Al Najjar Memorial Award was established by the Yafa Foundation to honor Rouzan's legacy, who was killed by the Israelis while working as a nurse in 2018. "Getting selected for this award was very touching, especially considering the life and legacy of the late Rouzan Al Najjar," commented Adam.

Adam is deeply grateful for the Trustee Amabel James Nursing Scholarship and AUB's financial aid program, which have made his and many other students' journeys possible. "Thanks to the generous support I have received from AUB, I can look forward to contributing to the field of nursing and translating my knowledge into practice," he says.



AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
OF BEIRUT



To speak to someone about supporting financial aid, contact us at [giving@aub.edu.lb](mailto:giving@aub.edu.lb) or make a gift at [give.aub.edu.lb](http://give.aub.edu.lb)



Get ready for the next

# AUB4Beirut Run

## HAPPENING AROUND THE WORLD

October 4–6, 2024!



UfS Walk



Mount Lebanon



Los Angeles



Abu Dhabi



Montreal



San Diego



AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
OF BEIRUT

### Return Address

American University of Beirut  
Office of University Advancement  
PO Box 11- 0236 1107- 2020  
Beirut, Lebanon



ب. ٢٩٧  
P. 297