FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The American University of Beirut celebrates liberal education, peace, and hope on its 156th Founders Day

The American University of Beirut (AUB) celebrated the 156th anniversary since it was founded on December 3, 1866, this year with Mayor of Pafos Phedonas Phedonos as keynote speaker. The ceremony at AUB's iconic Assembly Hall brought together students, staff, deans, and upper administration and included the traditional procession, awarding of student essay contest winners, and musical performances.

"One thing that was true in 1866 and remains true today is that philanthropy remains a critical element of our impact and sustainability: from the original donors who made launching this university a reality, to the generous thousands who support us today, whether via our highly successful fundraisers, individual gifts, grants and scholarships from our partner foundations and supporting institutions, or through the many inspiring examples of empathy and humanity," said AUB President Fadlo Khuri in his inauguration speech. The president added that AUB's long history of philanthropic support is celebrated by organizing Giving Day on Founders Day as AUB's whole community of alumni and friends around the world show their support for this institution and its ongoing mission to serve.

Emphasizing AUB's sense of responsibility and purpose, Khuri spoke about the founding of a new twin campus in Pafos, Cyprus, named the American University of Beirut – Mediterraneo, and its role in the transformation of higher education and continuity in the service of the region.

For the essay contest for this year, the students were asked to study and select the qualities of the university they deemed most vital to preserve in order to ensure the sustainability, impact, and transformational influence of AUB. Three contest winners were awarded by the president. First place winner was Fadi Salaheddin, a MEPI - Tomorrow's Leaders scholar from Syria in his senior year studying psychology and business administration. In his essay entitled "Where Free Minds Flourish," he shares his personal experience, transformation, and journey as he navigates a holistic and engaging liberal arts education at AUB.

"AUB has been a force of change and liberation and has served and continues to serve the peoples of the region," read Salaheddin. "Now the responsibility is even greater to include the different community members especially those who cannot afford an AUB education, to nurture freedom and plant the seeds of civic responsibility."

Winning second place was Rudy Zalzal, a biology senior on the premedical track who wrote an essay titled "Words Taken to Heart: That they may have life and have it more abundantly." In his essay, Rudy links the Berytus red of AUB's updated brand identity to the soil of his grandfather's land in the Beqaa and "its services to the ecosystem, its successes against a concatenation of crises, and the empowerment it gives to all forms of life."

Third place winner, Hussein Moussa, is a senior economics and applied mathematics student who for the second year in a row was among the top 3 winners of this contest. Hussein's essay this year, titled "AUB Transcending…," casts light on the opportunities of coexistence, inclusivity, and diversity offered at AUB, and the ways this institution transcends the shackles to reaching one's full potential and accessing true liberal education.

After a musical interlude played by AUB medical student Khalil Chahine, President Khuri introduced Mayor Phedonos who addressed the audience with a keynote speech about "Education as a pillar for peace and prosperity: The Eastern Mediterranean's best hope."

"Here and now, passionate and committed, we must collectively promote university education throughout our region, provide the opportunity for such high-level achievement, open the doors to everyone," he said. "If we can only manage to raise access to universities in our region by 15% in the coming years and promote excellence through

high-level education in the production chain of innovation and entrepreneurship, then we shall indeed forge strong foundations of peace and prosperity."

"Your great contribution for the realization of a common vision. It will bear the fruit that will spread the seeds of peace and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean. We need them now more than ever. In marking this remarkable milestone, I share this belief with you. By joining forces, by sharing our knowledge and capabilities, we pave the road to long term prosperity. Peace and progress unto you. All the best for AUB. Here's to the next century and a half," added the mayor.

The ceremony concluded with the Alma Mater and a recession that took the audience to AUB's plaza in an ambiance of saxophone live music celebrating serving and giving.

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Note to Editors

About AUB
Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 800 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 365-bed hospital.

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