For Immediate Release

AUB introduces electronic balloting to 2013 student elections

Beirut, Lebanon- 05/11/2013 – Nearly 330 students ran for spots on the 109-member Student Representative Council (SRC), with students campaigning for one of two main coalitions--the red-and-white "Students at Work" against a coalition of the fluorescent yellow "Students for Change." In addition, independent, anti-political groups united under the banner of the white "Campus Choice," while a new campaign, the grey "Leadership Club," emerged this year, whose mandate is to welcome political activism, while keeping it out of student elections.

About 10 seats were won by acclamation this year.

From 10 am to 5 pm, nearly 8000 students voted in their respective faculties, in a calm yet competitive manner.

This year Student Affairs Dean Talal Nizameddin introduced some additional changes to the electoral process. In the smaller faculties of Health Sciences, Medicine, Nursing and Agricultural and Food Sciences, students could vote for the first time via computer screens set up in the polling booths.
"This will help speed up the counting process," explained Nizameddin, adding that AUB is constantly striving to improve the election logistics, and that's why he hopes that by next year all balloting will take place electronically.

Also in a first, candidates were able to submit their nominations online, instead of in person, thus facilitating the process to students.

Just like last year, students were invited to choose their SRC and University Student-Faculty Council (USFC) representatives during the same election, in an attempt to include more students in the selection of the USFC members. Traditionally only the newly-elected SRC representatives would vote in the week after Election Day for the 17 student representatives on the 24-member USFC..

Newly-elected SRC representatives are scheduled to vote for SRC cabinets on November 12, while the 24-member USFC is expected to vote for its vice-president, secretary, and treasurer in early December.

Dean Nizameddin described the election process as "competitive yet calm."
"As usual the rivalry is intense but fully within the framework of democratic competition," he added. "What's important is that students partake in this annual tradition of electing their representatives, since the process itself is an excellent learning experience."

Nizameddin added that the focus this year was on accountability. "This means that for the first time ever, students who submit their candidacy must also provide a written explanation of why they want to run for the SRC in addition to an election platform, which will help students hold these candidates accountable once they become representatives," he said. "In addition, after the elections, we will hold a workshop to help guide the students and introduce them to University guidelines, leadership skills, duties and responsibilities and technical matters such as minute-taking, meetings management and other areas related to governance."

Students running on one platform or another all cited a laundry list of items affecting student life as the reason behind their campaigning. From lobbying against price increases, to improving dorms, to facilitating access to the Internet or the registration process, to focusing more on student demands, to improving USFC accountability—all ostensibly had the enhancement of student life on their minds. And each group distributed printed platforms to voters to try to win their votes.

Just like in previous years, observers from the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections oversaw Election Day on campus with about 15 observers weaving in and out of faculties and ballot counting areas. LADE Coordinator at AUB Tamim BouKarroum lauded the AUB student elections, describing them as "very good, as usual."

As in every election, access to campus was confined to students and staff with valid AUB IDs, in addition to the drove of print, radio, and TV reporters covering the event.

The Office of Student Affairs, which oversees elections every year, enforced voting rules in the strictest fashion. Moreover, Dean Nizameddin banned all political flags, posters, flyers, and photos on campus.

To help enforce these rules, the Office of Student Affairs relied on four closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, installed five years ago around West Hall, to record and subsequently punish, if needed, any violators of the University Code of Conduct.

By 5:30 pm, shortly after voting had ended, two large computer-linked screens were set up on West Hall's colonnaded porch. The screens beamed election results to spirited students over a four-hour period, while serving to keep the two main camps meters apart. Nevertheless that did not stop each camp from taunting the other with boos and chants. Results per faculty started being released within an hour after the polls had closed. Full winners' lists were expected to be out by 9.30 pm.

Names of winners per faculty per class were tweeted within a few minutes of their being announced, and they were also published on AUB's official Facebook, Twitter and Google+ pages. AUB has around 19,000 followers on Twitter as well as 68,300 fans on Facebook and around 2,400 fans on Google+. For the first time, AUB also posted election news on its LinkedIn page with its 6,900 followers. The University also posted photos from Election Day on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Google+. Twitter hashtag #aubelections was widely used by students and reached over 200,000 accounts with over 420,000 impressions. By evening, #aubelections was trending on Twitter.

Student elections at AUB have a long history that dates back to 1949, when the first general elections took place. This annual event was interrupted in 1982 at the height of the 1975-1990 Lebanese war, only to resume in 1994.

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