



THE BALAMANDIANS

FROM THE EDITOR

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DR. GEORGE HELOU'S
COMMENCEMENT KEYNOTE
SPEECH

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UOB Club for UNESCO receives support
from LNCU

UOB Students Receive Second Place
Award at the 2021 Concrete Solutions
Competition

UOB Recognized as an ACI Excellent
University



FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Balamandians,

The leading academic and community efforts played by the University of Balamand led the University to solidly impose itself as a major actor, and a goal of reference in terms of healthcare, and innovative digital technologies.

Despite all the unprecedented challenges and all our sufferings, the University of Balamand was able to grab the opportunities, and to maintain its position as Second Best University in Lebanon in the QS World University Rankings.

In yet another initiative that created impact on the society, the University of Balamand was recognized by its recently established COVID - 19 Vaccination Center that received the Golden Initiative Award from the Arab Hospitals Federation.

With critical challenges affecting academic institutions, both due to COVID - 19 and the economic crisis, the University of Balamand had managed to maintain effective and efficient quality education with the appointment of new deans to continue building high-quality education programs. It has also put together a strategy to offset the impact of the economic crisis on the population, by increasing the financial assistance offered to students to help them traverse the crisis.

As you navigate through this issue, you will learn about the contributions that our faculty, staff and students are making and the achievements of our alumni, who are a testament to the opportunities created by the University of Balamand.

I hope you enjoy reading the Balamandians. Your engagement with the University of Balamand is key to its success.

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٢٤ تموز ٢٠٢١



DR. ELIAS L. WARRAK

President

صَاحِبِ الْغَيْبَةِ الْبَطْرِيكِ يُوحِنَا الْعَاشِرَ الْكَلْبِي الطُّوبَى وَالْجَزِيلَ الْإِحْتِرَامَ، بِطَرِيرِكَ أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ وَسَائِرِ الْمَشْرِقِ،
أَصْحَابِ الْمَعَالِي وَالسَّعَادَةِ وَالسِّيَادَةِ،
الزُّمْلَاءَ أَعْضَاءَ الْهَيْئَةِ التَّعْلِيمِيَّةِ وَالْإِدَارِيَّةِ،
طُلَابِنَا الْأَعْزَاءَ وَأَوْلِيَاءَتِهِمُ الْكِرَامَ،

مَنْذُ سَنَتَيْنِ، وَفِي هَذَا الْمَكَانِ بِالذَّاتِ، تَوَجَّهْتُ إِلَى الْمُتَخَرِّجِينَ مِنْ طُلَابِنَا أَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى نَسْجِ
مُسْتَقْبَلِهِمْ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ، مُسْتَقْبَلًا أَوْصِيَتْهُمْ أَنْ يَبْنُوهُ بِأَمَلٍ مُشْرِقٍ، وَخُلُقٍ لَامِعٍ، وَمَنَاقِيبِيَّةٍ خَلَّاقَةٍ.
مُسْتَقْبَلًا يَعْكُسُ مَا تَعَلَّمُوهُ فِي هَذَا الصَّرْحِ، مِنْ مَكَارِمِ الْأَخْلَاقِ، وَمَبَادِيئِ النَّزَاهَةِ، وَاسْتِقَامَةِ الرَّأْيِ.

أَوْصِيَتْهُمْ جِيئَهَا أَنْ يَحْفَظُوا أَهْلَهُمْ، وَكَرَامَتَهُمْ، وَوَطَنَهُمْ.

أَوْصِيَتْهُمْ أَنْ يَحْلُمُوا لِأَنَّ الْكَلِمَةَ أَسَاسُ الْحَيَاةِ.

أَوْصِيَتْهُمْ أَنْ لَا يَخَافُوا الْحَيَاةَ بَلْ يَعْشَقُوهَا، وَيَعِيشُوهَا بِمَخَافَةِ اللَّهِ وَوَصَايَاهِ.

مَنْذُ سَنَتَيْنِ وَفِي هَذَا الْمَكَانِ، اجْتَمَعْنَا لِنَقُولَ نَعْمَ لِحَيَاةٍ أَفْضَلَ، وَمُسْتَقْبَلٍ أَفْضَلَ، وَأَمَلٍ أَفْضَلَ.
أَمَّا الْيَوْمَ، فَإِنَّ الْحَيَاةَ الَّتِي عَرَفْنَاهَا قَدْ تَغَيَّرَتْ، وَمَفَاهِيمُهَا انْقَلَبَتْ، وَأَفَاقُهَا تَبَدَّلَتْ، وَأَحْلَامُ أَبْنَائِهَا
تَحَوَّلَتْ سَرَابًا.

سَنَتَانِ مَرَّتَا، تَغَيَّرَ فِيهَا كُنْهَ التَّعَايِشِ الْإِنْسَانِيِّ، فَأَصْبَحْنَا نَقْرَأُ لُغَةَ الْغُيُوبِ لِأَنَّ الْأَفْوَاهَ كُفَّتْ.

وَأَصْبَحْنَا نَتَجَنَّبُ عِنَاقَ مَنْ نُحِبُّ لِأَنَّ نُجُبَهُمْ.

وَأَصْبَحْنَا نُكَلِّمُ أَجْبَاءَنَا عَبْرَ شَاشَاتٍ بَالِيَةٍ بَارِدَةٍ لَا رُوحَ فِيهَا وَلَا جَسَدَ.

وَأَصْبَحْنَا نَعِزُّلُ مَرْضَانَا بَدَلًا مِنْ أَنْ نُمْسِكَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ،

وَأَصْبَحْنَا نَدْفُنُ مَوْتَانَا وَجِيدِينَ، دُونَ عَزَاءٍ وَلَا مَعْرَظِينَ،

وَأَصْبَحْنَا نَحْتَفِلُ بِأَفْرَاجِنَا بِحُزْنٍ وَوَحْدَةٍ وَكَأَبَةٍ.

فَحَيَاةُ الْيَوْمِ أَصْبَحَتْ مُتَقَلِّبَةً كَطَقِيسٍ تَشْرِينِ، مُلَبَّدَةً الْأَفْقِ كَخَيْومِ كَانُونِ، وَلَكِنَّهَا تَنْتَظِرُ شَمْسَ
الرَّبِيعِ، الَّذِي لَا بُدَّ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ حَامِلًا مَعَهُ وَرُودَ الْأَمَلِ، وَغَابِقًا بِأَرِيحِ الْفَرَحِ، وَمُدْوِيًا بِتِرَانِيمِ الْإِيمَانِ وَالزَّجَاءِ
الصَّالِحِ.

جِئْتُ الْيَوْمَ بَدَلُ أَنْ أُوَدِّعَكُمْ وَصَايَا الْأَبِّ لِأَبْنَائِهِ كَمَا فَعَلْتُ مَنْذُ سَنَتَيْنِ،

جِئْتُ لِأَقُولَ لَكُمْ لَا تَيَأَسُوا.

لَا تَيَأَسُوا إِنْ اشْتَدَّتْ الْمَظَالِمُ عَلَيْكُمْ، وَبَدَا النِّفْقُ الْمُظْلِمُ طَوِيلًا، لِأَنَّ الظُّلْمَ زَائِلٌ، وَالظَّالِمِينَ إِلَى
فَنَاءٍ.

لَا تَيَأَسُوا إِنْ نَظَرْتُمْ إِلَى كُكَّامِ عُقُولِهِمْ بَالِيَةٍ تَاهِتَةٍ، وَقُلُوبِهِمْ بَارِدَةٍ كَحِجَارَةِ الْقُبُورِ، وَضَمَائِرِهِمْ
نَائِمَةٌ غَافِلَةٌ، تَنْتَظِرُ أَنْ يَنْدَحْرَجَ حَجَرُ الْقِيَامَةِ عَنْ سُبَاتِهَا الْعَمِيقِ، كُكَّامًا يَخَافُونَ مِنْ ذَكَاءِ شِبَابِ
وَطَنِهِمْ كَيْ لَا يُحْرَجُونَ فِي غَبَائِهِمْ.

لَا تَبْأَسُوا مِن وُجُودِهِمْ، لِأَنَّ حُكْمَ الطُّغَاةِ إِلَى زَوَالٍ، وَالطُّغَاةُ إِلَى مَرْتَلَةِ التَّارِيخِ.

لَا تَبْأَسُوا مِن فِكْرِهِمْ وَخِذَاعِهِمْ وَلَا تَبْأَسُوا حِينَ تَسْمَعُونَ نَهْمَهُمْ يُحَاضِرُونَ بِالنِّزَاهَةِ وَهُمْ يَمْعِنُونَ بِالْفَسَادِ، بَلْ تَعَلَّمُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا لَا يَجِبُ أَنْ تَعْمَلُوهُ.

تَعَلَّمُوا أَنْ تَكُونُوا مِثَالاً حَيّاً لِمَا تُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ.

تَعَلَّمُوا أَنْ تُجَاهِرُوا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا الْحَقِيقَةَ فِي وَطَنِ الْأَسْئَلَةِ الَّتِي لَا جَوَابَ لَهَا:

فَلَا جَوَابَ عَنِ كَهْرِبَاءٍ تَتَلَاشَى،

وَلَا جَوَابَ عَنِ بَنزِينَ مَفْقُودٍ،

وَلَا جَوَابَ عَنِ دَوَاءٍ مَقْطُوعٍ،

وَلَا جَوَابَ عَنِ مَنْ ارْتَكَبَ جَرِيْمَةً ضِدَّ الْإِنْسَانِيَّةِ.

كُلُّهَا أَسْئَلَةٌ لَا جَوَابَ لَهَا، لِأَنَّهَا يَخَافُونَ الْحَقَّ، وَيَخْشَوْنَ الْعَدَالَهَ، وَيَمْتَهِنُونَ الْكُذِبَ وَالنِّفَاقَ.

لَا تَبْأَسُوا إِنْ عَصَفَتْ بِأَمَالِكُمْ رِيَاخُ الْجَهْلِ وَالْإِسْتِبْدَادِ، وَإِنْ غَطَّى مُسْتَقْبَلَكُمْ سَوَادُ الْيَأْسِ، بَلْ تَذَكَّرُوا أَنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمْ ضَانِعُو مُسْتَقْبَلِكُمْ، وَهُوَ مَلِكُكُمْ، وَمَلِكُكُمْ وَحْدَكُمْ، فَعَيْشُوا مَقُولَةَ «تَجْرِي الرِّيَاخُ كَمَا تَبْغِي سَفِينَتُنَا، فَنَحْنُ الشِّرَاعُ وَنَحْنُ الرِّيْحُ وَالْقَدَرُ».

لَا تَبْأَسُوا إِنْ شَحَّتْ مَصَادِرُ رِزْقِكُمْ، فَالْأَرْزَاقُ بِيَدِ الْخَالِقِ، وَكُلٌّ يَأْخُذُ نَصِيبَهُ فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا الْفَانِيَةِ.

لَا تَنْسُوا كَرْفَكُمْ وَعَطَاءَكُمْ، وَتَذَكَّرُوا أَنَّ الشَّمْسَ لَا تُضِيءُ لِنَفْسِهَا، وَالنَّهْرُ لَا يَشْرَبُ مِنْ مَائِهِ، وَالشَّجَرَةُ لَا تَأْكُلُ مِنْ ثَمَارِهَا.

فَكَمَا كَرَفَكُمْ، لَا تَنْسُوا كِرَامَتَكُمْ وَتَذَكَّرُوا أَنَّ الْكِرْمَ هُوَ أَنْ تُعْطِيَ أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا تَمْلِكُ، أَمَا الْكِرَامَةُ فَهِيَ أَنْ تَأْخُذَ أَقْلَ مِمَّا تَحْتَاجُ، كَمَا قَالَ جُبْرَانُ خَلِيلِ جُبْرَانِ.

لَا تَبْأَسُوا إِنْ لَمْ تَجِدُوا الْأَمَلَ فِي نَظَرَاتِ مَنْ تُحِبُّونَ وَيُحِبُّونَكُمْ، فَالْأَمَلُ هُوَ نِتَاجُ النَّفْسِ الْمُؤْمِنَةِ، فَابْقُوا عَلَى إِيْمَانِكُمْ، فَكَمَا يَقُولُ بُولَسُ الرَّسُولِ إِنَّ هُنَاكَ ثَلَاثَةٌ أُمُورٍ هَامَّةٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ: الْإِيْمَانُ، وَالْمَحَبَّةُ، وَالرِّجَاءُ، لِأَنَّ فَايِدَ الرِّجَاءِ يَرْتَكِبُ الْمَعَاصِي.

لَا تَبْأَسُوا مِنْ وَطَنِ غَلِيلِ قَرِيضٍ، بَلْ تَذَكَّرُوا أَنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمْ الرُّوحُ وَأَنْتُمْ النَّبِضُ وَأَنْتُمْ الدَّوَاءُ.

لَا تُهْمَلُوا وَطَنَكُمْ وَعَامِلُوهُ كَمَا تُعَامِلُوا أَهْلَكُمْ. فَأَهْلُنَا إِنْ أَصَابَهُمُ الْمَرَضُ، نَبْقَى إِلَى جَانِبِهِمْ إِلَى أَنْ يَتَعَاْفُوا، وَلَا نَهْجُرُهُمْ لِنَعُودَ بَعْدَ أَنْ يَتِمَّائِلُوا لِلشِّفَاءِ. وَتَذَكَّرُوا أَنَّ الْوَطْنَ كَالْكَرَامَةِ إِنْ خَسِرْتَهُ فَمَنْ يَنْعُودُ.

لَا تَبْأَسُوا فَهْمَا اسْتَدَّتْ مَصَاعِبُ الْحَيَاةِ عَلَيكُمْ، وَمَهْمَا كَثُرَتْ آلَمُهَا وَضَعُفَتْ آمَالُهَا، فَأَنْتُمْ الْأَمَلُ، وَأَنْتُمْ الرِّجَاءُ، وَأَنْتُمْ سَبِيلُ الْخَلَّاصِ، وَطَرِيقُ الْقِيَامَةِ.

خَارِبُوا الْجَهْلَ وَالْفَقْرَ وَالْفَسَادَ، فَوَيْلٌ لِأُمَّةٍ يَسُودُهَا الْعَوْرُ، وَيُدِيرُهَا الْجَهْلُ، وَيَمْلِكُهَا الْفَسَادُ.

أَخِيرًا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ، لَا تَبْأَسُوا مِنْ وَطَنِكُمْ، وَلَا تَهْجُرُوهُ، وَإِنْ كَانَتْ مُغْرِبَاتُ الدُّنْيَا وَرَعْدُ الْعَيْشِ سَهْلَةً الْمَنَالِ أَيْنَمَا تَهَاجِرُونَ، لَا تَكُونُوا كَالطُّيُورِ الْمُهَاجِرَةِ تَبْحَثُ عَنِ طَعَامِهَا فِي أَقَاصِي الْأَرْضِ، دُونَ انْتِمَاءٍ وَلَا هَوِيَّةٍ وَلَا جُذُورٍ. بَلْ كُونُوا زَائِسِيْنَ كَشَجَرِ الْأَرْزِ، مِعْطَائِينَ كِبْرَاعِمِ الرِّيْتُونَ، شَامِخِينَ وَفَخُورِينَ كَجِبَالِ لُبْنَانَ.

أَدْعُوكُمْ إِن غَادَرْتُمْ وَطَنَكُمْ، أَنْ تَعُودُوا إِلَيْهِ، فَأَنْتُمْ أَمَلُ هَذَا الْوَطَنِ وَشِعْلَةُ الْحَيَاةِ فِيهِ، فَإِن
انْطَفَأَتِ الشَّعْلَةُ زَالَ الْوَطَنُ.

عُودُوا لَوْطَنِ تَصْنَعُوهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ،
وَطَنًا يَرْفِي لِمُسْتَوَى أَحْلَامِكُمْ،

وَطَنًا غَانَى الْحُرُوبِ وَالْاِحْتِلَالِ وَالظُّلْمِ وَالْقَهْرِ، وَلَكِنَّهُ أَهْدَى الْعَالَمِ نُورَ الْحَرَفِ، وَمَنْحَ الْبَشَرِيَّةِ سِرَّ
الْقِدَاسَةِ وَرَحْمَةَ الْقِدْيَسِيِّنَ، وَنَسِجَ اسْطُورَةِ طَائِرِ الْفِينِيْقِ، لِأَنَّ شَعْبَهُ، وَإِن قُتِلَ أَلْفَ مَرَّةٍ، يَعُودُ
لِحَيَاةٍ أَلْفَ مَرَّةٍ وَمَرَّةً.

كُونُوا فِي وَطَنِكُمْ وَلِوِطَنِكُمْ،
كُونُوا مَعَ شَعْبِكُمْ وَلِشَعْبِكُمْ،
كُونُوا قَادَةَ الْعِلْمِ وَالْمَعْرِفَةِ فِي بَلَدِ الْعِلْمِ وَالْمَعْرِفَةِ.
كُونُوا مِثَالَ الْمُواطِنَةِ الصَّالِحَةِ وَمَحِبَّةِ الْوَطَنِ. وَتَذَكَّرُوا أَنَّ «كُلَّ مَا يَطْلُبُهُ لُبْنَانٌ مِنْكُمْ هُوَ أَنْ
تُحِبُّوهُ، تُحِبُّوهُ قَلِيلًا»، كَمَا قَالَ نِزَارُ قِبَانِي.

عُشْتُمْ، عَاشَتْ جَامِعَةُ الْبَلْمَنْدِ، وَعَاشَ لُبْنَانٌ، فِيكُمْ وَمِنْكُمْ وَلَكُمْ.



لَا تَيَأْسُوا إِنِ اشْتَدَّتْ الْمَظَالِمُ عَلَيْكُمْ، وَبَدَا
النَّفَقُ الْمُظْلِمُ طَوِيلًا، لِأَنَّ الظُّلْمَ زَائِلٌ،
وَالظَّالِمِينَ إِلَى فَنَاءٍ.

تَذَكَّرُوا أَنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمْ صَانِعُو مُسْتَقْبَلِكُمْ، وَهُوَ
مِلْكُكُمْ، وَمَلِكُكُمْ وَحَدُّكُمْ

لَا تَيَأْسُوا مِنْ وَطَنِكُمْ، وَلَا تَهْجُرُوهُ، وَإِن كَانَتْ
مُغْرِبَاتُ الدُّنْيَا وَرَغَدُ الْعَيْشِ سَهْلَةً الْمَنَالِ أَيَّمَا
تُهَاجِرُونَ

كُونُوا رَاسِخِينَ كَشَجَرِ الْأَرْزِ، مِعْطَائِينَ كَبِرَاعِمِ
الزَيْتُونِ، شَامِخِينَ وَفَخَّورِينَ كَجِبَالِ لُبْنَانِ.



DR. GEORGE HELOU

*Executive Director of the Infrared
Processing and Analysis Center
(IPAC)*

*Professor in the Division of Physics,
Mathematics and Astronomy at
California Institute of Technology
(Caltech)*

*Deputy Director of the Spitzer
Science Center and Director of the
NASA Herschel Science Center in
Pasadena California.*

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Your Beatitude John X, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East,
Your Excellencies, Your Eminences,
Dear Members of the Board of Trustees of Balamand University
Dear President Warrak and Provost Bahr,
Dear Faculty and Staff,
Dear Students and Families,

Thank you for the kind invitation to speak at this celebration of your graduates today, and especially for allowing me to do it remotely. I am honored and delighted to participate from a distance, and very much hope that I will visit the campus again before long and meet your faculty and students in person.

Congratulations to the Graduates! Congratulations to their families, their faculty and mentors, and to Balamand University. I wish I could be standing with you on beautiful Balamand Hill to convey my warmest wishes face to face, but I am with you in heart and thought and in technology.

This moment that brings us together across continents and oceans reminds us what a small planet we inhabit, and what a global span our species has achieved. Earth is a small planet floating in a vast cosmos, a cosmos to which we are closely connected. How close are we to the cosmos? If you got into a car and drove straight up at 100 km per hour it would take you about an hour to reach outer space, an empty, cold, dangerous and fascinating expanse. If you continue at the same speed, you reach the Moon in about 4 months, and Mars in 89 years. This is of course a cartoon of space travel, but it illustrates the vastness of space and the insignificance of our home planet, our “pale blue dot.”

But let's get back to the here and now. I know what terrible times you are experiencing. The woes visited on Lebanon are many and scary, and the roads to recovery seem impossible. You live these woes every day, and I know about them from following the news and talking to family and friends. Against those dark clouds, I am here to tell you that things will get better. Life will improve, the woes will dissipate, and you will look back on these terrible times and recognize in this very experience the seeds of better days. How do I know this?

First, I know this from personal experience. I got my Bachelor's degree in Lebanon at a time when the situation was so bad that graduation ceremonies were canceled. In a faint echo of that time, our son graduated in the U.S. during the worst economic crisis in several decades. The situation was so bad that his commencement speaker focused on explaining how the U.S. economy was collapsing and how the world economy would soon follow. Our son started a job with a technology company within a year and never looked back. The U.S. economy and the world survived.

Second, I know that things will get better because the arc of history has always pointed up, energized by Reason and Enlightenment. Humanity's drive and aspirations have always led to a better world, more safe and secure, more connected and content, more prosperous and often more inclusive. The magic that allows me to participate in this celebration from 12,000 km away is a direct result of science and engineering progress, of business progress, and of thousands of workyears aimed at turning the impossible into the normal. Reason and Enlightenment inexorably lead to recovery from setbacks and to advancement. It works for communities, for nations, groups of nations and the world when they follow the principles of rational thinking, evidence-based practices, and respect for our shared humanity.

Even Lebanon's history is a series of setbacks and recoveries, each time leading to a better place. This is not unique to Lebanon, but the Lebanese seem to have been on this path forever. The road will be tortuous and seemingly endless. Some steps will lead forward and some backward. Some steps will be small and some large, but they will all require changes and sacrifices major and minor. Perseverance is the only choice for it will ultimately pay off.

Thirdly and most importantly, things will get better because of you, graduates, because of your drive, your aspirations, your energy and especially your education. What you have learned at Balamand University is now an integral part of you. Your culture, knowledge and skills are immune to depreciation because of a dropping exchange rate and immune to depreciation because of a social crisis. These intellectual tools are yours forever and their value will only increase as you hone them to the ever-changing world.

That assertion of better days in your future is my most important message to you, and I could end my discourse now. However, since this is commencement, I am bound by tradition to provide you with a last bit of advice as you turn to the next chapter of your life. So what advice do I offer, in the midst of terrible times?

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First, keep your options open. Make choices that leave you with many possible ways forward and many doors to try. Then knock on each of those doors, for life is full of surprises, the best of which can be found by seeking and cannot be found by waiting. One way to increase your options is to keep learning, keep the student in you alive for that will keep you young, ready to seize every opportunity, and ready for good surprises.

Second, think big, be ambitious, be bold, but be kind to others. In difficult times the narrow thinking is that we can only advance at the expense of others. Think big to avoid the temptation of acting so narrowly. It is precisely in difficult times that we need to think outside the box, to find opportunities, and to create them. In good times and bad, the golden rule has always been "do unto others as you will have them do unto you". Without this golden rule, our species will never survive planetary threats such as shifting climates or limited resources.

Third, think big, meaning consider the big picture and go back to fundamentals. If you ask me, one of the most fundamental aspects of our shared humanity is that we are all part of the Universe, and intimately tied to the Universe in surprising ways. Almost every atom in our bodies was once inside a star, and those stars have forged the atoms that make life on Earth possible. Every Carbon or Oxygen, every Iron or Gold atom was forged in a stellar core or in a mighty collision of stars. The atmosphere of Earth is deeply affected by distant cosmic explosions and nearby solar eruptions. We are constantly showered by energetic cosmic rays, some of which originate millions of light-years away and millions of years ago. Conversely, our galaxy contains tens of millions of Earth-like planets orbiting in a temperate zone around their host stars, inviting questions about water on their surface, their suitability for life and eventually about the uniqueness of Earth. Every day our research in astrophysics discovers new phenomena and new connections, helping us better understand this Universe and our place in it. Think big, think cosmic.

Let me close with my congratulations on all your achievements, and my very best wishes for a bright future, even if such a future is delayed. Equipped with your Balamand University education, you are ready for the world, have no doubt about it. Equally without a doubt, the world is ready for you to step up and make it a better place. Go forth and engage the world with reason, with courage and in peace.

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2021

On July 24, 1,447 students celebrated their graduation from the University of Balamand in a ceremony that took place at the University's main campus, with the participation of thousands of parents, friends, and faculty members. The ceremony was held under the auspices and presence of His Beatitude Patriarch John X who delivered a short prayer to the graduating students.

President Elias Warrak, in turn, addressed the students, telling them "Don't fall in despair if the future seems like a dark tunnel with no light at the end, because unfairness and injustice will fade away". Adding, "Remember that you can create your future with your own actions, because the future belongs to you". He concluded his talk by calling on the graduates not to give up on their country, and not to leave it, in search of better standards of living.

Addressing the crowd through a live video message, Dr. Georges El Helou, Executive Director of the Infrared Processing and Analysis Center (IPAC) and a Professor in the Division of Physics, Mathematics and Astronomy at California Institute of Technology (Caltech), underscored that "the woes visited on Lebanon are many and scary, and the roads to recovery seem impossible, adding that against those dark clouds, things will get better, life will improve, the woes will dissipate".



COMMENCEMENT SUMMARY



He also offered the graduates an advice mined from his own career, saying that things will get better because the arc of history has always pointed up, energized by Reason and Enlightenment. He continued: “humanity’s drive and aspirations have always led to a better world, more safe and secure, more connected and content, more prosperous and often more inclusive. The magic that allows me to participate in this celebration from 12,000 km away is a direct result of science and engineering progress, of business progress, and of thousands of work years aimed at turning the impossible into the normal”.

He further added that, things will get better because of the graduates thrive and education, the skills, and the intellectual tools they have acquired at the University of Balamand, which, he describes as “immune to depreciation because of a dropping exchange rate and immune to depreciation because of a social crisis”. “These intellectual tools are yours forever and their value will only increase as you hone them to the ever-changing world”, he added. He concluded his address by congratulating graduates on all their achievements, and presenting his very best wishes for a bright future, even if such a future is delayed.

Congratulations Class of 2021!





*Dr. Huda Abu Saad Huijer
Dean of the Faculty of Health
Sciences*

INVESTING IN HEALTH FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Balamand, Dr. Huda Abu-Saad Huijer's vision for the faculty is to become a world-class Faculty of Health Sciences, transforming health education and health care in order to be more responsive to the needs of the population.

With this in mind, Dean Huijer is introducing new graduate programs including an interdisciplinary PhD, and is in the process of launching a Center of Excellence in Health Research in the coming five years. "We are also in the process of creating an International Advisory Board and plan to establish honor societies to enhance excellence in education, research, service and governance", she notes.

She describes her job as challenging, yet she is looking forward to working with faculty, staff, and the community at large to achieve her goals and to help FHS conquer additional academic challenges.

Dr. Abu-Saad Huijer received her BSN from AUB and her Masters and PhD from the University of Florida, USA. Her career span includes professorial positions at the University of California, San Francisco, University of Maastricht, the Netherlands, University of Surrey UK, and more recently AUB. During her academic tenure in the Netherlands as head of the Nursing Science Program, she was instrumental in developing the MSN (offered at three universities in the Netherlands and in Switzerland) and PhD programs, and in establishing the Centre for Nursing Research.

Her research endeavors have focused primarily on pain management and palliative care in children and adults. To that effect, she has supervised a large number of PhD dissertations and has been lead investigator on a large number of funded projects in the Netherlands and in Lebanon on pain management, palliative care, and integrated models of care for the chronically ill. Her research endeavors in Lebanon have focused primarily on pain management & palliative care in adults and children.

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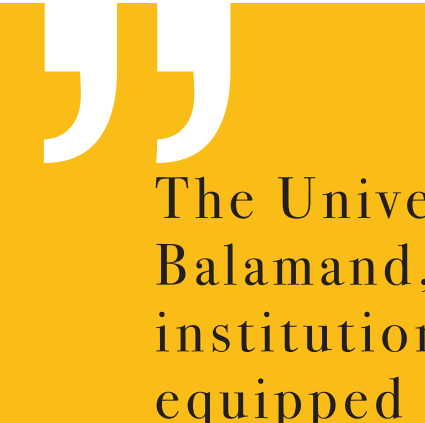
WHAT IS DEAN HUIJER'S VISION FOR THE FHS?

Dean Huijer's focus, as she explained, is on interprofessional education and scientific research. She considers them as strategic goals to achieve the mission of the Faculty in promoting innovation, integrity, professionalism, and interprofessional collaboration and enhancing excellence in education, research, service and governance.

The University of Balamand, she says, as an academic institution is fully equipped and ideally positioned to play an active role in the promotion of health and the development of knowledge with the participation of all sectors, through interdisciplinary and international research collaboration. No doubt, the potentials in investing in health could be very significant and the University Leadership is leading the way through the newly developed FHS campus in Beirut.

In addition, she says that the fact that UOB ranked the 2nd best University in the QS world University Ranking is an indicator of the quality of programs and teaching modalities offered at UOB. "It could be possible in not-too-distant future for the FHS to become internationally recognized and achieve accreditation of all academic programs".

To achieve all the strategic goals, Dean Huijer revealed that FHS aims to establish strategic partnerships locally, regionally, and internationally and engage the community of interest and stakeholders in all academic programs.



The University of Balamand, as an academic institution, is fully equipped and ideally positioned to play an active role in the promotion of health and the development of knowledge.



*Dr. Karim Rebeiz
Dean of the Faculty of Business &
Management*

BUSINESS: AN ART AND A SCIENCE

Generally, business management is viewed as a science. Business is thus, concerned with the application of knowledge and skills, emphasizing good decision making and accomplishing an end through identifying alternatives. However, in the words of Dean Karim Rebeiz, business is also “an art that requires a broad range of skills needed for the attainment of impactful decision making”. The science of business is mostly gained through academic training and is in the form of explicit knowledge that could be codified in writing via scholarly contributions. However, the art of business is predominantly acquired through corporate experience and cannot be codified as it is in the form of implicit knowledge. In Businesses, he explains, you are constantly making difficult decisions, adding that the function of businesses is to reflect on the choices you make, and to anticipate the short and long-term consequences.

Dr. Rebeiz spent many years of intensive corporate experience in the United States and consulting engagements in Europe, an experience, he says, “was enriching for being a Dean of a business school”. Indeed, the Dean should have been intimately involved and exposed to the object of inquiry from the inside, namely the business organization in all of its forms, sizes and vocations.

He received his PHD from the University of Texas at Austin, his MBA from Harvard Business School, and his Bachelor in Engineering from the American University of Beirut. He draws upon more than twenty years of academic experience as an Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor at Lafayette College, the American University of Beirut and Phoenicia University, respectively. He was also a visiting professor at universities in North America and Europe, including the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, HEC Paris, University of Hartford, and Otto Von Guericke University in Magdeburg.

As Dean of the Faculty of Business and Management, Dr. Rebeiz is adamant that the Faculty is to acquire further visibility and recognition and become a school of choice in the region and beyond. He explains that the faculty members will aim to provide the students with the best educational value for the tuition investment, and adds, “our mission is built on innovation, scholarly contribution, students-centeredness and community engagement. Our core values are moral integrity, cultural sensitivity, institutional collegiality, and social responsibility”.

**WE LET STUDENTS
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Dean Rebeiz intends to prepare responsible professionals and develop change makers who will transform Lebanon and the region. "This goal is part of the Faculty strategic plan to support the educational needs of the different programs by reviewing the curricula, recruiting new faculty, encouraging teaching excellence, and boosting research". He believes on interactive teaching. In his words, "we let students do most of the teaching by letting them interact frequently via teamwork, by involving them in experiential learning, and by exposing them to real business problems with the right balance of theory and practice". He is confident that the Faculty of Business and Management is responding to this philosophy and also to the mission of the University.

The Faculty, he explains, offers the students a dynamic curriculum that is constantly evolving with a marketplace that is in a constant state of flux. At the undergraduate level, we offer a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) and a Bachelor of Science in Economics (BSE). At the graduate level, we offer five programs, among them a Master of Business Administration (MBA) and an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA).


At the University of Balamand, he believes that he has found his natural place. "The Faculty of Business and Management at the University of Balamand is a great place to jumpstart or rejuvenate your early, mid, or late business career", he says.

Considering the challenges facing education, teaching and learning approaches are put in place to prepare students to enter the business world, and to adapt to complex situations, explains Dean Rebeiz. Online education, he argues, has become a common occurrence in the midst of the global pandemic and today's challenges. "Most reputable universities of the world, he explains, have leveraged technological resources not only to remain operational, but to also increase revenues while reducing costs".

Adding, "We have to be in tune with the new demands of the marketplace; otherwise, we will be missing the boat. We don't need to abandon in-person teaching for students who see the value in it. We simply need to think about creating "parallel" degree programs and blended learning alternatives. If we strategically and judiciously embrace this online momentum, we could expand our reach access exponentially".

In an effort to meet the vision and mission of the faculty, Dr. Rebeiz is undergoing a number of strategic initiatives. For instance, he is actively seeking AACSB accreditation. He is also assembling an effective board of advisors. In addition, he is restructuring the undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Moreover, he is revamping the curricula. Furthermore, he is creating new and highly relevant certificate programs. Finally, he is making strategic partnerships with foreign universities and business organizations. In performing all the aforementioned initiatives, he believes that it is important to stay intimately connected with the alumni and other key stakeholders.

Dean Rebeiz believes that the University is making leaps and bounds in achieving its strategic objectives despite the prevailing difficult situation in the country. He is indeed confident that the University is on the right track of becoming a world-class university that would provide its learners with the distinctive competencies to make a difference and to transform their communities into a better place. Specifically, he greatly values the support and commitment of President Warrak in advancing the vision and mission of the Faculty of Business and Management in its quest to become a faculty of choice in the region and beyond.



**The Faculty of Business
and Management at the
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*Dr. Nour Rachkidi
Director of the School of Tourism and
Hotel Management*

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES: TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

An economic crisis exacerbated by a health crisis and continuous lockdowns have caused unprecedented setbacks to many sectors, especially the hospitality industry. With many studies suggesting that a return to pre-COVID levels of activity might not happen before 2023, what does the future hold for those who work or consider having a career in this industry?

With his academic background and extensive experience in the Tourism and Hospitality Management sectors, Dr. Rachkidi designed new academic programs and developed new curricula for higher education institutions and comes with a breadth of knowledge and experience to lead the Tourism and Hospitality Management School during this time of global change.

Dr. Rachkidi has occupied senior academic and administrative positions in leading institutions and holds a postgraduate degree in International Hospitality and Hotel Management from the University of Western Sydney in Australia as well as a Ph.D. in Tourism and Marketing from Rennes-1 University in France.

“Three years from now, it will be a different hiring atmosphere for new college graduates in the hospitality industry”, stated Dr. Nour Rachkidi. The newly appointed Director of the School of Tourism and Hotel Management strongly believes that, like many industries, hospitality will see substantial shifts in the post-pandemic era and he is confident that the hospitality sector promises a world of career opportunities.

With the all-too-known industry challenges, a rise in opportunities does not necessarily mean equal opportunities to all. For tomorrow belongs to those who manage to read the transformations in the industry and adapt by acquiring and honing the right set of skills.

While trends indicate that it will still be quite some time before the hospitality sector returns to business as usual, Dr. Rachkidi aims to invest that time in preparing students and have them market-ready for, what may translate into, a rapid re-engagement in the hospitality industry.

Beyond education, we develop careers.

“Investing in the hospitality and tourism sector is a long-term goal”, explains Rachkidi, adding that Universities should adapt their offerings to reflect changing preferences, and market needs.

The school has a large database of contacts in the hospitality industry providing our graduates an easy transition into the career market.

Therefore, the University of Balamand has agreed on modernizing the program and introduced concentrations in: Hotel Management, Restaurant Management and Events Management.

In addition, Dr. Rachkidi launched the SIR (students’ international relations) office to develop and manage international opportunities for our students and is working on affiliations with leading management schools, to provide an educational experience to develop the leadership and management skills needed by industry leaders.

WHY TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY?

Career opportunities in tourism and hospitality will grow progressively as the industry continues to adapt and evolve.

The Ministry of Tourism is working on a new path for tourism, with the recent emergence of guest houses, a new tourist accommodation type.

The following list shows the hospitality sectors:

- Lodging industry
- Food and Beverage
- Transportation sector (tourism)
- Managed services (companies that have food & beverages and lodging as second services such as hospitals).
- Mice (Meeting, incentive travels, conventions, expositions)
- Recreation sector (Spa, casino)

Whether you are looking for a career in events management, hotel management or restaurant management, the tourism and hospitality industry is an excellent choice, said Dr. Rachkidi.

Asked to address a message to prospective students, he said:

“The School of Tourism and Hotel Management (THM) at the University of Balamand offers the highest quality of hospitality education by mixing the European practical standards of culinary arts and the western management style of leading. THM ensures that all graduate students have the skills and knowledge needed to be leaders in the hospitality industry. Students at the University of Balamand will learn from leading professionals and will also experience internships at a range of prestigious organizations.

Three years from now, it will be a different hiring atmosphere for new college graduates in the hospitality industry. Investing in the hospitality and tourism sector is a long-term goal.

In addition, the degree of Tourism and Hotel Management at UOB is growing to be one of the most recognized hospitality degrees in the region. This is due to the following three pillars:

- 1- A strong academic program with over 30 core subjects in the field of tourism and hospitality.
- 2- A dedicated school campus to include food and beverages laboratories and training facilities for students.
- 3- A student's exposure to the job markets via the established connections of the school academic staff and their long experience in the tourism and hospitality field.

WHY IS IT SMART TO INVEST IN THE SCHOOL OF TOURISM AND HOTEL MANAGEMENT IN THE MIDST OF THE CHANGING ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE?

The Tourism and Hotel Management (THM) field continues to attract a growing number of students due to its immunity against fluctuating economics and people's continuous need for travel and food services.

The THM School at UOB is the only school in the whole region of North Lebanon, which provides a high caliber of graduates from all over the country for over 23 years.

The school is expanding its capability to support the hospitality industries in the Northern area of Lebanon by being the only center of excellence for the tourism and hospitality sector in this region. This support can take the form of guiding F&B companies on service & process improvements, sharing new THM business concepts, organizing campus conferences to exchange the latest THM developments.

The school will be also providing advisory services to small and medium enterprises to not only make ends meet but also thrive and find opportunities to increase their profits in challenging conditions.

Therefore any financial support to the school will not only benefit the school but will also impact the THM sector in the whole Northern region of Lebanon and especially Koura area.



*Patricia Antaki
Director of the Department of
Archaeology and Museology*

PRESERVING CULTURE AND HERITAGE

The Department of Archaeology and Museology (DAM) was officially established in 2010 as an integral part of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Near Eastern Studies (IOHANES), at the University of Balamand. Its mission is to study, preserve, and promote Cultural Heritage as a whole. This includes mainly part of the tangible as well as the intangible Cultural Heritage of Lebanon and the Near East with a special interest for the surrounding Koura area and North Lebanon region.

In the archaeological field, DAM's mission is being achieved by conducting, for more than ten years now, several archaeological excavations, surveys, studies, researches, lectures, conferences, publications, exhibitions, events and webinars related to various sites and monuments.

In the museology field, and since the opening of its ethnographic museum in 2009, DAM has carried out ethnographical campaigns oriented towards the recording, the preservation and the dissemination of Ethnographic Heritage. One of the major accomplishments has been the creation of a Master degree in Museum Studies and Cultural Heritage Management.

INNOVATION, INVESTMENT, NEW APPOINTMENTS

Why is the University investing in the field of archaeology and museology?

Dr. Patricia Antaki was appointed as Director of the Department of Archaeology and Museology in the Institute of History, Archaeology and Near Eastern Studies (IOHANNES) in September 2020.

Dr. Antaki holds a PHD in Archeology and History of Arts from the University of Poitiers in France and has an excellent record of research and publications in reputable scientific journals. As a distinguished scholar in medieval archaeology, she has conducted several archaeological investigations on several ancient monasteries, churches and chapels of the region and directed several soundings and excavations.

**ARCHAEOLOGY IS A
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AND WHERE WE WANT
TO GO**

She has been involved in the archaeological research on the Crusader Monastery of Balamand, the archaeological project of Enfeh, as well as the medieval archaeological remains of Lebanon, especially those located in Northern Lebanon, Dr. Antaki is currently working with the Directorate General of Antiquities on several projects.

The department coordinates with different entities for the excavations projects. There is a network of specialists working within the department, consisting of working within the department of Archaeology and Museology: Lorine Mouawad - archaeologist, Samaya Nasr - architect, Fadia Ibrahim - assistant and Rita Kalindjian - archaeologist, museologist and fine artist. Mrs. Kalindjian is the actual curator of the Ethnography Museum.

Ceramology: the study of ceramics

In the department of archaeology, there are pottery studies and archaeological interpretation of these objects, with the help of ceramologists.

Studies are conducted regarding material products as the product of cultural processes, which explains the significance of the study of pottery, or ceramology.

Pottery is not regarded as a source of data, but as an object of research, explains Ms. Rita Kalindjian.

WHY DOES THE UNIVERSITY NEED SUCH A DEPARTMENT?

Archaeology is the study of the human past. Whether it is the story of our relationship with the natural world, arguments about the origins of people, or debates about how and why societies change, archaeology is a subject that makes us think about where we are now and where we want to go.

As archaeologists, we are interested in all aspects of the past, explains Dr. Antaki. The role of the university is to preserve this cultural aspect, she says.

BALAMAND ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM

The Balamand Ethnographic Museum is part of ICOM list of museums in Lebanon. According to the ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August 2007, the current definition is as follows:

"A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment".

DAM EDUCATIVE PROJECT COURSE OFFERINGS

The Department of Archaeology and Museology offers courses and degrees in archaeology and museology including: Lebanese and Near-Eastern archaeology, Near-Eastern Medieval Studies, Museum Studies and Cultural Heritage Management, Master degree in Conservation /Restoration of Cultural Goods (ALBA project with our collaboration) in partnership with INP (Institut National du Patrimoine).

DAM EXPANSIVE PROJECT ANFEH ARCHAEOLOGY

The field work undertaken on various sites in Anfeh during the past 10 years has yielded a huge amount of data and material which is under analysis.

Ongoing Projects

DAM AMBITIOUS PROJECT! ARCHAEOLOGY & HERITAGE IN KOURA REGION

Village by village

One of the ongoing projects conducted by DAM is the archaeology and heritage in Koura region, where field investigation and surveys will be conducted prior to publishing the results.

Another project is improving our ethnographic museum, creating a new story line with panel texts and labels, expanding our collections, producing short movies and publishing articles.

Other projects

Creating a virtual museum with 3D technology in partnership with the Digital Humanities Department

Ecotourism project: Creation of a Salt Park in Anfeh in partnership with:

- The municipality of Anfeh
- UNDP
- Air France
- SPNL (Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon)/HIMA Anfeh

DAM EXPERTISE PROJECTS

- Counseling for Musa Ler Museum, the Ethnographic Armenian Museum of Anjar
- Counseling for the Med Gaims project (virtual games on archaeological sites) for Sidon sea castle



“Our mission is to study,
preserve, and promote
Cultural Heritage as a
whole”

YOU'VE GOT TO
STAY ON TOP OF
TECHNOLOGY
TRENDS,
AND THAT IS
WHAT WE ARE
EMBRACING IN
OUR CENTER.



Dr. Elie Dannaoui
Director of the Digital Humanities
Center

DIGITAL HUMANITIES CENTER: BRINGING TECHNOLOGY TO BEAR

Director of the Digital Humanities Center at the University of Balamand admits it is challenging to play a leading role in human societies. As the director responsible for coordinating technology policies to preserve and disseminate the heritage and its human wealth in various fields, Dr. Elie Dannaoui has a challenging job to place the center on a sustainable path.

The University of Balamand established the Digital Humanities center DHC in 2012 as a department in the Institute of History, Archaeology and Near Eastern Studies (IOHANES) to support the humanities in fostering its leading role in human societies, by facilitating information accessibility and giving researchers and the concerned community the opportunity to collaborate and have better knowledge acquaintance.

Since its establishment, the center has been growing and significant projects have been developed, where the center currently operates four research programs: Arabic Manuscripts and Old Printed Books (ArHive), Interdisciplinary Networks of Gospels Ecosystem in Arabic Language (INGEAL), Heritage and Technology (HeriTech), Digital Textual Scholarship (DigiTS), and Morphe (Virtual Museum of Lebanon Arts and Culture)

There are a lot of opportunities and challenges in technology, says Dr. Dannaoui. "You've got to stay on top of technology trends, and that is what we are embracing in our center".

Dr. Dannaoui runs a center involving a team of 10 faculty members, researchers, and research assistants that hold a background in Theology, Educational Technology, History, Computer Science, Architecture, and Computer Graphics. He notes that the center gives special attention to archives as it is concerned with collecting, digitizing and indexing the materials, in accordance with universally accepted norms, and preserving them in databases to be used by researchers. In addition, he says that the DHC is also involved in the PAVONE project that presents the first database in the world that gathers and digitizes all the Arabic Manuscripts of the four Gospels for preservation and study, which makes it an important and remarkable project.


Another project the center is particularly proud of is the Morphe project. Morphe is a virtual museum within which the DHC creates diverse exhibitions, bringing Lebanon's arts and culture online and making them widely accessible to a universal audience. "We tried to bring the human interaction in the virtual environment through our Morphe project", Dr. Dannaoui notes. Morphe, he explains, is a Greek word meaning "form" that was inspired by that changing volume of the virtual space.

The museum is thought to incubate different collections including tangible (paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts, monuments, archaeological sites) and intangible (oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, etc) possessions available at the UOB and obtained from different cultural partners and organizations in Lebanon and abroad.

Utilizing high resolution image technology for a great virtual-tour experience, Morphe features a 360 degree-view presentation of the various collections where visitors can walk through and enjoy the different exhibits via an interactive experience.

The architecture of the virtual space, explains Dr. Dannaoui, reflects the transformation in the term morphe as it changes its shape and position in UOB in every exhibition. It follows an inverted virtual space that coexists with its surroundings on campus that becomes in total symbiosis via transparency and reflection.

The first Digital Humanities center in the Arab world, the DHC aims to be a buffer zone that creates a virtual environment for artworks, featuring leading museums and archives.



We tried to bring the human interaction in the virtual environment through our Morphe project.

UOB ATHLETICS: CREATING POSITIVE SPORTS ENVIRONMENT

UOB ATHLETICS: CREATING POSITIVE SPORTS ENVIRONMENT

Sports have this unique way of making a positive impact in society. As such, “the University of Balamand strives to provide the best impact, not just in term of our facilities but also in terms of the well-being of the UOB community”, says the newly appointed Senior Director of the Office of Athletics, Wellness and Recreation at UOB, Mr. Ghaleb Halimi.

The new fitness center, he explains, provides a wide range of activities and programs that are aligned with the mission of the University, which are accessible to students of all skills, abilities, and interests, in addition to the university faculty, staff, and alumni.

Sports are hugely influential in shaping genders norms and stereotypes about gender. As such, one of our goals at UOB, he says, is to ensure equity for all participants.

ATHLETICS STRATEGIC PLAN: SEIZING OPPORTUNITY, BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Mr. Halimi explains that he is working towards a program that places emphasis on the academic success of student athletes, the fair and equitable treatment of young women and young men, the principles of fair play, amateur and semi-professional athletics competition, and the health and welfare of student athletes. In doing so, the athletic program will: (1) provide the opportunity to participate for all (2) create and maintain an enjoyable educational sport and fitness atmosphere, (3) foster a sense of spirit, enthusiasm, and pride in the University and for physical activity as part of a routine balanced lifestyle, and (4) promote the image and reputation of UOB in Lebanon, throughout the region, and beyond, (5) provide coaching of the finest quality, (6) offer facilities that provide excellent venues for safe and high-caliber competition, and (7) deliver customer service that is consistently excellent.



*Dr. Ghaleb Halimi
Senior Director of the Office of
Athletics, Wellness and Recreation*

“We are constantly reflecting on how we can create value for our students”.

We are committed to demonstrate excellence in academics and athletics. Our department is designed to meet these goals in both the athletics field and classroom.

WE ARE CONSTANTLY REFLECTING ON HOW WE CAN CREATE VALUE FOR OUR STUDENTS

WELLNESS PROGRAM

“We believe that by investing in the wellness program, change can occur from our investments”.

To maintain a healthy mind, it is essential to maintain a healthy body. That is indeed the mission of the wellness program. Since body and mind are intertwined, the Office of Athletics, Wellness and Recreation endeavors to impact and develop the health and wellness of students, staff, faculty, and the neighboring community. We seek to develop the well-being of UOB Community by empowering them to make healthy lifestyle choices in accordance with their own values, morals, ethics, and belief systems, explains Mr. Halimi. “Our mission is to deliver comprehensive and continuous primary healthcare services to our community to ensure a healthier life and holistic well-being. We also aim to create a healthier study and work environment through the establishment of programs and centers as well as provide incentives that promote and support healthy lifestyle choices, which helps students become more successful members of the academic community”.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAM

“We are dedicated to fostering a healthy, active lifestyle and creating an environment that promotes social interaction and integration”.

By developing recreational activities that are essential for the wellbeing of students, faculty and staff, we are dedicated to fostering a healthy, active lifestyle and create an environment that promotes social interaction and integration. The recreational activities will also offer participants opportunities to learn new skills, increase physical strength and fitness, and provide a balance in their daily life routines. By introducing and encouraging these activities, the Office of Athletics, Wellness and Recreation hopes that students will develop a life-long interest in health and fitness.

WHY IS IT SMART TO INVEST IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS?

College sports teams are struggling to survive, as budgets are reduced due to the coronavirus pandemic. This would normally seem to make it less important to invest in this field, but it pushed the University of Balamand to create a plan that fits its strategic goals, in this new economic and health reality.

BUILDING UPON THE MISSION

The University's decisions are framed by its mission. This explains the investment in Athletics. "Investments in student-athletes inspire a life-changing vision and offers student-athletes the opportunity to compete, excel academically, and realize their dreams", explained Mr. Halimi.

It is undeniable that financial contributions are an essential source of revenue for university athletic departments. Therefore, "investing in the athletics department will give the opportunity to your donation to motivate, encourage, influence, inspire and create excellence today, with the guarantee that the investment will create a lifelong legacy, strengthen the Athletic Department and touch limitless lives for generations", concluded Mr. Halimi.

Athletics teams include:

Men Soccer

Men and Women's Basketball

Men and Women's futsal

Men's Rugby

Men and Women's Volleyball

Men and Women's Swimming

Men and Women's Badminton

Men's Handball

Men and Women's Track and field

Men and Women's Tennis

Men and Women's Table Tennis



We believe that by investing in the wellness program, change can occur from our investments.

BERNARD MERHE

Founder of Phoenixlab Company



Bernard Merhi established a limited partnership company that was registered at the Secretariat of Commercial Register in Tripoli, and known as: "PhoenixLab" Company.

Bernard Merhe, a Chemical Engineering graduate, obtained his Bachelor of Science in Biology, followed by a BS and MS in Chemical Engineering. Soon after his graduation from the University of Balamand, he worked in waste water and water analysis, but Bernard had bigger plans.

"I was always interested in lab equipment, and was determined to launch my own company", he said.

Bernard was always passionate about machines and how they work. His passion for engineering and lab equipment drove him to launch his own company "Phoenixlab".

Phoenixlab was authorized as exclusive and independent distributor to sell and service Hirschman Volumetric Glassware in Lebanon.

"I was delighted with the support I received, so I proceeded". To scale up the project, Bernard completed an intensive service and maintenance training in Germany - this included maintenance of laboratory equipment. He thus established a limited partnership company in Eddeh Batroun, which deals with import and export, sale and marketing of equipment, tools, and necessary equipment for medical, chemical, industrial, scientific and agricultural laboratories as well as laboratories specialized in chemical, biological, bacterial and medical research and analysis.

MY EDUCATION
HELPED ME
GAIN HANDS- ON
EXPERIENCE
IN PRACTICAL
EXPERIENCES IN LABS

Bernard, who enjoyed all his major courses at UOB, emphasized that his education helped him gain hands - on experience as he was engaged in practical experiences in labs. "Throughout my university courses, I gained experience in chemical reactions, separation processes, general chemistry, petroleum, microbiology, immunobiology, cell biology, mathematics courses, physics courses, genetics, fuel cell technology, and organic chemistry that served as a foundation for my career".

In 2016, Bernard claimed first prize in the Order of Engineers & Architects in Tripoli for his project entitled: "Determination of physical and chemical properties of olive and oak trees residues for the production of biomass briquettes", that he worked on with his colleague Olivia Boutros, under the supervision of Dr. Rima Manneh. The aim of his project, he explains, is to study the physical properties of olive grove and oak trees pruning residues, prior to briquettes large scale production and use. In particular, the properties studied are the moisture content, ash content, size, bulk and particles densities. The case study was done for Lebanese olive and oak trees in the northern district of El Koura. This study was a first of its kind in Lebanon, and the project was an integral part of the SABioP project funded by the European Union.

His university experience impacted him on the academic as well as on the personal level, says Bernard, due to the quality of teaching and the support he received from his professors.

Asked to offer a word of advice to current students, he said: Choose a major you like for your future career path, and believe in yourself to achieve your goals.



I was always interested in lab equipment, and was determined to launch my own company.

JACK KHOURI

On the power of research to improve patient care



*Dr. Jack Khouri
Hematologist/oncologist at the
Cleveland Clinic*

Dr. Jack Khouri has always been a Balamandian at heart. He feels he belongs to the Balamand community, he says, as he has fond memories from both the Balamand University and the Collège Notre Dame du Balamand from where he finished his High School.

Fast-paced and committed in everything he does, Dr. Khouri, who has an MD degree from the Faculty of Medicine and Medical Sciences at the University of Balamand, decided to pursue his residency training in the USA, following his graduation from med school.

Securing a residency position in the competitive matching programs in the USA was prompted by UOB School of Medicine's rich curriculum that is geared towards preparing medical students to excel at their US Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) and ultimately secure a residency position in the US. Another factor, he added, is the close ties that the faculty members had with the US.

Dr. Khouri's research and clinical interests are in plasma cell disorders (mainly multiple myeloma and AL amyloidosis), bone marrow transplantation and cell-based therapies. "I mostly work on investigating novel targeted agents in clinical trials, says Dr. Khouri, adding that he believes in the power of the immune system as an effective tool to fight cancer, stressing that he is particularly interested in studying novel immune therapies (medications and cell engineering) to treat cancer. These are very exciting times in myeloma care as we have recently started to treat patients with myeloma with Chimeric Antigen Receptor T (CAR T) cell therapy (genetically modified T cells) after the first FDA approval of this kind of therapy in myeloma occurred earlier this year, he says. He is currently investigating monoclonal antibodies in multiple myeloma as well as antibodies that eliminate AL amyloid fibrils in order to improve the organ dsfunction associated with AL amyloidosis.

WE ALWAYS STRIVE TO
STUDY OUR PATIENTS'
CLINICAL OUTCOMES
TO IMPROVE OUR
UNDERSTANDING OF
DISEASE ENTITIES.
I AM ALWAYS WORKING
ON INVESTIGATOR-
INITIATED TRIALS
TO BRING NOVEL
THERAPIES TO
PATIENTS.

Dr. Khouri is a hematologist/oncologist at the Cleveland Clinic, (CCF), "a leading academic center in the state of Ohio in the US where, he is part of a rare disease program that is geared towards improving the care of patients with rare disorders, where research and clinical trials are scant", he explains. This is where; he says, he has learned and was trained to do his job, skillfully, earning him a reputation among patients and clinicians. "We always strive to study our patients' clinical outcomes to improve our understanding of disease entities, open clinical trials and develop treatment algorithms to guide the care of patients at our main hospital and regional sites", he says.

Last year, Dr. Khouri saved the life of Daphne Jones, who walked again after effective treatment for a rare blood disorder. Dr. Khouri made the diagnosis after it was missed for several months and ultimately helped reverse her spiraling health issues: POEMS syndrome. According to Dr. Khouri, a specialist in cancers and disorders of the blood, who typically sees no more than three new POEMS patients in a year, "POEMS is a very rare and debilitating plasma cell disorder and can be mistaken for other neurological disorders, even by neurologists.

Fortunately, many POEMS patients recover by being on medications that suppress the plasma cell, which is the source of the disease. In Daphne's case, explains Dr. Khouri, she has been on anti-plasma cell agents to control her disease and almost immediately after initiation of treatment, she saw the positive effects of the medications.

Dr. Khouri's philosophy as a doctor mirrors that of the Cleveland Clinic where he works: "patients first". "Delivering exceptional patient care with empathy is at the center of everything we do every day", he says. "I also strongly believe in the power of research in order to improve patient care and always strive to bring novel clinical trials to patients".

Asked to offer a word of advice to Balamand students, he says: "You are all well-prepared and destined to do great things. Work hard and dream big". Dr. Khouri says he made lifetime friends when he was a student at UOB, where he was a member of the oriental choir. One performance he is particularly proud of, is "Alli gara" which he performed at the tribute to Salwa Katrib in 2010.

Dr. Khouri feels he has made an impact on patient care, and is continuously working on improving the care of cancer patients. "I am always working on investigator-initiated trials as well as collaborating with pharmaceutical companies to bring novel therapies to patients", he said. And that is a light at the end of the tunnel!



I would first like to thank the University of Balamand, its administration, and all the staff members for all the hard work and efforts they are putting in order to provide us, students, with the best teaching services as well as academic and life skills. To be honest, when I first decided to apply to the University of Balamand in order to start my career path, I was very hesitant and doubtful. As I faced an obstacle many applicants might face these days with the current situation; which is the tuition fees and how I would be able to cover them if I got accepted.

My family's financial situation is considered to be relatively unstable after my father passed away, as my mother tried to cover all our expenses and study fees by the shy salary she got monthly. However, I did not give up on my goal, and I asked about the available alternatives at the university (financial aid and scholarships) so I would apply to them and start my college studies to pursue my aspirations. Once I applied to the financial assistance, and after it was accepted, I was very thankful and motivated even more to enroll at the University of Balamand. For I was going to be part of one of the most well-ranked universities in the region, that never fails to provide their students with the best knowledge and apprentice professionalism before taking part in the large and diverse workplace.

Having had the financial assistance, I really do believe that, us, students really continue to work hard and move forward into our educational journey. It is true that we might sometimes consider the tuition fees an obstacle and a challenge; but as it is said "where there is a will, there is a way". For me, having the opportunity of receiving financial help should only be a source of motivation and eustress to me and my colleagues, to keep up the good and hard work in order to stay on the road of success and to be leaders in our fields wherever we go.

Finally, I would like once again to thank the University of Balamand as well as the President's Office and the administration for all the chances and opportunities they give their students in order to seek a high level education, for them to be able to take part and build a better future to all of us in our beloved country or wherever we are.

Alicia Abi Nader



It was not among my family's financial ability to pay my University tuition without any financial support. I consulted with the registrar and explained my entire situation, I got all the information I needed regarding financial assistance and scholarships and took my decision based on that.

Definitely, I had a few factors contributing to my choice of university: my major, the campus location, the university's accreditation and my financial capabilities. In addition to the financial aid I received, and the scholarship provided by the university for all Public Health and Development students like myself, I have been receiving a merit scholarship every semester since my first, for my academic performance and GPA. The merit scholarship and the financial assistance have definitely been one of the little pushes I give myself to work and study harder. Especially in stressful times we have been going through in the country, they have contributed to my perseverance, and I have been able to stay on the same academic performance as my first year, pre-thawra, pre-Covid-19 and pre-chaos.

Dana Achkar



The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated by the economic crisis in Lebanon was devastating to many businesses, where it caused losses in employment, and disastrous consequences on families.

However, to address and mitigate the impact of the crisis, the University of Balamand is trying to support its students by increasing their financial assistance when needed while keeping the tuition fees the same.

For Elissa Hajj, now in her third year of studying nutrition, financial problems worsened with the crisis, because her dad lost his job in 2020. Her father, a sports brand manager was badly affected by the economic crisis, where he lost his job.

Nevertheless, Elissa did not want to change her career path, and drop out of the university, because she can't afford the tuition fees. She thus applied to a readjustment to her financial aid, because her family couldn't afford paying her tuition fees. "As we know, all students receiving a financial support should maintain a 3.2 GPA, to be eligible for financial aid. So, for me, it was a push to work harder and perform better in my courses to obtain a higher GPA that would help me earn and boost the financial support and for better opportunities in the future", said Elissa.

Elissa Hajj



I was born in a middle-income family where completing a degree at a private and reputable university was hard to accomplish without support. Knowing that my parents were carrying the load of educational fees for three of my sisters, I needed financial assistance to be able to carry on with my studies.

Had it not been for the financial assistance, I wouldn't have been able to enroll at UOB. Back then, I applied to several universities and my decision was based on the percentage of financial aid received by each. Receiving financial aid made a difference between choosing to study at a private university and a public one.

As such, receiving a scholarship along with financial aid motivated me to perform better in my courses. I worked hard to keep a constant high GPA in order not to lose this support. It was indeed a challenge for me, but it was the reason behind graduating with distinction. This accomplishment gave me the opportunity to apply for graduate scholarships and be more qualified in my field of study.

Thank you for giving me a helping hand when I needed it the most. I am forever grateful for your generous contribution to my future.

Haifa Hilal

”

I was compelled to apply for financial assistance by the fact that my father is a retired soldier (he retired years ago from the Lebanese Army) and that he was not able to pay the tuition fees completely knowing that my two sisters were enrolled at school at that time. But I didn't give up, and my dream to be a doctor became true when I decided to enroll at the University of Balamand. Consequently, knowing that I can maintain an average that would allow me to be an honor list student and get more support regarding the financial matter I currently depend on myself and the financial aid I took.

The financial aid played a major role in affecting my decision even though it's still hard for my father to pay the tuition fees, the financial aid I got encouraged me to follow my dreams and take the challenge of becoming an honor list student and receive more discounts to continue my education at the University of Balamand.

The scholarship I received thankfully from the University of Balamand definitely changed my life, it allowed me to become a student at UOB which is a pleasure that I always wanted to have even before I graduated from school. If I didn't receive the scholarship probably I wouldn't get into the university and my father would hesitate about completing my education after I graduated from school. This saved my life and my future and I'm really happy for that.

Mohammad Saleh





The reason I applied for financial assistance was because I had recently relocated back to Lebanon. During these hard times the country is facing it was difficult to find a job while being a full time student. I wanted to have a fresh start at life again after some personal hardships and it would have been a difficult start if not for the financial aid given.

When I decided to relocate, the University of Balamand was my first choice. However I have also looked into other nursing programs. The financial aid offered and received by UOB and the professional treatment from the administration and FHS team has compelled me to pursue my education at UOB. I felt supported by their aid. I felt that I am more than just a student and that my education matters to them.

The scholarship I received has definitely embedded a sense of responsibility in me to maintain a high average in my courses. I felt that the need to study hard and get good grades is not only rewarding to me but also it would be a thank you and an appreciation to the help UOB has bestowed on me. The financial aid I received has kept me going through the semester telling myself not to give up and that I can still do this. I didn't want to let myself down. I didn't want to let my professors and university down. I kept telling myself that they believed in me and gave me financial assistance so I should believe in myself and continue the course.

The application process was simple and clear to fill. The financial aid team was always ready to help and answer back through emails to clear things up for me despite the lockdowns we faced.

As a first year undergraduate student applying for the financial aid has granted me confidence in pursuing my studies and mastering them. In these unprecedented times it ensured my chances at getting a proper education.

Nariman Shamseddine



I applied for financial assistance as I was raised by a single mother who has one income and is unable to support my educational finances on her own.

The University of Balamand has always been my first option but I always knew a financial aid is a must for me to enroll as my mother is unable to support the finances on her own.

For the past four years I have received scholarship and financial aid from the university, this opportunity has changed my life as it has given me the chance of an education in a highly reputable institution. My dream has always been to become a doctor. This scholarship has given me the motivation to keep doing better and thrive in everything presented to me. It has given me hope to succeed and become a doctor in the future. Moreover, I would like to take this opportunity to thank this institution for creating such equal chances for all who wish to pursue an education but are unable due to financial reasons.

At the beginning of my education in our esteemed university I was provided a full scholarship from both my school and the university. My school had opted to support my education as I was a straight A student and they knew about my family history.

Dr. Moubayed and Dr. Kanaan ensured that I continue my education at the university and supported my scholarship until now. Again, I cannot stop to express my gratitude and appreciation to the support of the whole staff in the university who inspire us all to continue our education no matter what the constraints are.

Nour Jaalouk



Since childhood, I have been raised on this remarkable quote: "Dreams don't work unless we do" and there is no doubt that those words were great enough to lead me through my educational journey. Yet, working on a dream faces financial limitations, taking into consideration that I have siblings who also sight for a successful future.

Fortunately, I had the privilege of being a UOB student and earning a scholarship that covered a great portion of the tuition fees. Such opportunity made me realize that when there is a will to study and achieve there will always be a way. It certainly made me more focused on my academic performance and less worried about the money issue that can be a constraint to the ambitions of many students, especially in those hard circumstances.

Rawan Chazbek

THE UNIVERSITY OF BALAMAND RECEIVES THE GOLD INITIATIVE CERTIFICATE FROM THE ARAB HOSPITALS FEDERATION



The University of Balamand received the Gold Initiative Certificate from the Arab Hospitals Federation, in recognition of the efforts and procedures adopted by the university to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and acknowledging the distinguished services provided to the community.

The Arab Hospitals Federation congratulated the University of Balamand for this achievement, acknowledging the efforts undertaken through the Balamand Hayati Project against Corona.

The project focused on four main areas: a novel mobile application that was developed by the GIS Center at the Faculty of Engineering, in consultation with a medical team of physicians and technologists, a diagnostic PCR laboratory for COVID-19 testing along with a drive-thru process that was adapted by several municipalities, and was managed and coordinated by the University of Balamand, dedicated training sessions offered by the UOB Medical simulation center to the representatives nominated by the municipalities all over Lebanon. In addition, the establishment of the UOB COVID-19 vaccination center, accredited by the Ministry of Health, received recognition.

All these efforts led the University of Balamand to earn the Pioneer project prize offered by the Arab Hospitals Federation through the Gold initiative phase.



UOB CLUB FOR UNESCO RECEIVES SUPPORT FROM THE LEBANESE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

Following its continuous social engagement and active involvement in awareness campaigns, the UOB Club for UNESCO received a \$1000 support from the Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO to promote SDG3 “Good Health and Well Being” and to celebrate the UN National Health Day, within the framework of the understanding of and support for UNESCO’s mission, priorities, and programs at the grassroots level.

Two Well Being Webinars were organized, by psychological Coach Eiko Minami, the first one on April the 17th addressed to the University students and the second one on April the 24th addressed to Saint George Hospital nurses. The webinars concentrated on finding the points of strength of each participant and find their mission in life.

The third activity was held through a program in collaboration with AJIALOUNA NGO consisting of supporting 30 families in Tripoli and Koura regions with food supply that lasts for a 1 month ensuring food security during the holy month of Ramadan and Easter.

Acting Dean of Student Affairs, Dr. Walid Moubayed, congratulated the UOB Club for UNESCO and their advisor Mrs. Diala Farah on their achievement commending their efforts to give back to society in these difficult times. He assured that the university will always be committed to support such student initiatives which truly stem from the university’s founding mission.



Member of Associations
and Clubs for UNESCO

UOB STUDENTS RECEIVE SECOND PLACE AWARD AT THE 2021 CONCRETE SOLUTIONS COMPETITION

A group of 5 University of Balamand students received 2nd place award (Most Innovative Design/Developmental Use of Concrete Category) at the 2021 Concrete Solutions Competition. Organized by American Concrete Institute (ACI) as part of the ACI Virtual Concrete Convention, the competition's aim is to encourage students to use creative means to present and explain their concrete approach or solution to a broad audience, including why it should interest the public at large. The teams each submitted a seven-minute video prior to the convention and were later interviewed by a panel of judges via Zoom during the convention.



Inspired by the devastating Beirut Blast on August 4th, 2020, UOB students presented the idea of recycling concrete from debris aiming to break the continuous pollution generation cycle from manufacturing to demolition which contributes to remarkable side effects on our environment. Recycling concrete wastes into aggregates, treating them, and introducing them into a cement-free geopolymer concrete mix that can be re-recycled was presented as the ultimate alternative cycle towards sustainable construction.

The winning team consisted of Lara AbdulKhalek, Rawan Ghanem, Carla Hamdan, Gaby Dawra, Ziad Moubayed, and Gayth Nasr. The team was supported by graduate student Ralph Jabbour and the ACI UOB Chapter faculty advisor Dr. Nariman Khalil. Dr. Khalil stated that she is very proud of the team's achievement especially as they stood out amongst 30 submissions from ACI Student Chapters around the world. She commended the team work and the effort put into this great achievement.

In turn, Vice President for Internationalization and Engagement and Dean of the Faculty of Engineering Prof. Rami Abboud met with the winning team, their advisor, and department chair Prof. Joseph Assaad to personally congratulate the team on a job very well done. Prof. Abboud emphasized his belief in the role of such competitions in sparking creativity, encouraging teamwork, and catalyzing innovation. "It is a great feat to be inspired from the tragedy of the Beirut Blast to make a positive difference in the world" he stated.

THE UNIVERSITY OF BALAMAND RECOGNIZED AS AN ACI EXCELLENT UNIVERSITY

For the fourth year in a row, the University of Balamand receives high recognition from the American Concrete Institute (ACI) for outstanding student activities. This year, the University of Balamand was recognized as an ACI Excellent University. The ACI award for University Student Activities identifies universities that are qualified for outstanding status based on points received for their participation in selected ACI-related activities and programs.

Established back in 2016, the ACI – UOB Student Chapter was the only chapter of its kind in the region. Throughout the past academic year, and despite the unorthodox situation, the student chapter has been an active part of the student life at the Faculty of Engineering organizing workshops, webinars, and taking part in local and global ACI competitions.

Vice President for Internationalization and Engagement and Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Prof. Rami Abboud, applauded the student chapter for their remarkable achievements praising the efforts of their advisor, Dr. Nariman Khalil and the chapter board members. Prof. Abboud emphasized the importance of the experience that students gain from actively engaging with professional societies like ACI. He concluded: “With the determination, dedication, and hard work of our students, such accolades truly place UOB as a beacon of engineering education on the regional and global scales”.

The American Concrete Institute (ACI) headquartered in Farmington Hills, Michigan, USA, is a leading authority and resource worldwide for the development and distribution of consensus-based standards, technical resources, educational programs, and proven expertise for individuals and organizations involved in concrete design, construction, and materials. This year, the ACI Excellent University recognition has been awarded to only 33 universities around the world. ACI currently has more than 15,000 student members and over 250 student chapters around the world.



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