

## **WAAAUB Convention**

**May 2, 2009**

**Launching Ceremony 9:00- 10: 00 am**

**Issam Fares Hall**

### **Trustee Farouk Jabre Remarks**

I was privileged to be a member of the Implementation Task Force that the Board of Trustees established in June 2005 to assist with the establishment of a single, worldwide alumni association for AUB. From the very beginning, my fellow task force members and I were convinced that this type of structure would increase and improve communications between the University and its alumni and encourage greater alumni participation and support for AUB. Like all the members of the AUB family, the trustees also understood – and appreciated – the important role that AUB alumni have always played at this University.

It probably won't surprise you to learn that this appreciation for its alumni is not new at AUB. I want to share with all of you some of what I recently discovered in a book that I think many of you know: *That They May Have Life: The Story of the American University of Beirut 1866-1941*. The book was written by Stephen Penrose, who would go on to become AUB's 4<sup>th</sup> president, and was published in 1941 to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AUB. In it, Penrose documented the University's history and captured some delightful anecdotes about those early days. I thought this passage that relates to the interest that this institution's first presidents had in staying in touch with – and supporting its – alumni might interest you:

“Howard Bliss [AUB’s 2<sup>nd</sup> president and the son of AUB’s founder and 1<sup>st</sup> president, Daniel Bliss], like his father, was as keenly interested in his students after they had left the College as when they were undergraduates. He tried to keep in touch with them to follow their work, and to promote their interests. Occasionally, he made trips through the Near East to seek them out, to find out how they were doing and what their associates thought of them.”

Penrose goes on to describe that “as early as 1902 an effort had been initiated to organize the alumni into a permanent association, but not until 1910 was this accomplished. Then, at Commencement, the large and enthusiastic body of alumni present voted to set up a central association in Beirut with branches all over the Near East.” I am sure I am not the only one here who recognizes that the association that Penrose describes – a central association with branches all over the world – is a pretty good description of the worldwide alumni association that is hosting its second annual convention this weekend!

The Board of Trustees that led the initiative to establish WAAAUB also recognized the important role of the alumni community and of the need for a structure that would serve the alumni and facilitate the University’s interest in strengthening its ties to this critically important community. I think it is so important that the BOT, which is the governing body of AUB and has ultimate authority in the affairs of the University, now includes alumni trustees who have been nominated by AUB alumni. The presence of these

three individuals enriches our discussions, broadens our perspectives, and strengthens the University.

Although alumni representation on the BOT is important, it is only one way that alumni have become more involved with AUB since the establishment of WAAAUB. Another way in which we can see their increased involvement is in the establishment of new chapters and branches – such as the two that have been established in Cairo and Philadelphia this year. I see this development – the decision of a group of AUB alumni to take the initiative to establish an alumni chapter in a part of the world where one did not previously exist – as one more indication of the success of WAAAUB. Our alumni now feel that their voices will be heard, that their input is welcomed – even solicited, and that they have a place at the table.

I know there is a lot of work to be done but I agree with Ambassador Makkawi that there is also a lot for all of us – not just AUB alumni – but all of us to celebrate as well.