



## American Higher Education in the Middle East

In the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in the presence of U.S. universities and colleges in the Middle East, with many elite schools setting up outposts in the Persian Gulf countries.

With a population heavily skewed toward youth, higher education in the Middle East is a target for institutions' global expansion plans. At the same time, interactive teaching styles – the hallmark of American education – have become increasingly appealing and acceptable to governments in the region.

On January 28, LAU NY, in partnership with the American University in Cairo, hosted a panel discussion entitled “American Higher Education in the Middle East,” featuring Safwan M. Masri, executive vice president for

Global Centers and Global Development at Columbia University and Ted Purinton, dean of the Graduate School of Education at AUC, and moderated by Dr. Lina Beydoun, academic executive director at LAU NY.

Masri and Purinton discussed the merits and challenges of taking a product that is fundamentally American – liberal arts education – and trying to replicate it abroad.

“There’s the pursuit of exclusivity in higher education, and having a global presence makes a university exclusive,” said Purinton. “Every country wants one of these types of universities, they symbolize modernity ... but they are the periphery of education, not the core.”

Factors like status, or economic needs of

the respective country, have contributed to the proliferation of such schools.

But one pitfall of this trend, scholars say, is the conflicting interests of Middle Eastern and U.S. educators. Another is the universities’ often limited ability to meet the needs of the masses, most of whom cannot afford an elite education.

Masri elaborated on Columbia’s eight global centers, which are extensions of the university aimed at getting its students and faculty engaged in the world. He gave an example of a Columbia political science professor who was able to design a unique course that took 15 students from the university, paired with 15 students from AUC, to study democracy building for four weeks

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# LAU academic center



## The New York Arabic Orchestra Comes to LAU NY

The corridors of LAU NY reverberated with the sweet and sultry sounds of traditional Arabic music on March 11 when the New York Academic Center, in partnership with the Consulate General of Lebanon in New York, welcomed the co-founders of the New York Arabic Orchestra for a special evening performance.

Bassam Saba and April Centrone played in front of a sold-out crowd, performing a diverse repertoire of songs that ranged from classical to contemporary, including selections from Farid al-Atrash, Fairuz and Ziad Rahbani, to traditional Arabic-Turkish music such as a *longa* and a *semai* in D minor by Mesut Jamil.

Saba and Centrone’s duet was an impressive display of musical genius, as the pair seamlessly switched from one instrument to the next, improvising as they went along, and transfixing the audience in a way only classical Arabic music can. Between them, they played *oud* (Middle Eastern lute), *nay* (Middle Eastern flute), *buzuk* (lute), *riq* (tambourine), western flute, and world percussions.

“Through the orchestra, we are working to create an institutional establishment, a place where anyone who wants to learn Arabic music can,” says Saba, who is Lebanese. “It’s important to promote yourself through your culture and not let the media dictate who you are ... art always gives a pure and honest picture of the society it comes from.”

The full NYAO comprises 40 musicians, hailing from multiple cultural, musical and educational backgrounds. To learn more about the NYAO visit [www.nyarabicorchestra.org](http://www.nyarabicorchestra.org)

## LAU NY ACADEMIC CALENDAR

### Public Events

**June 6:** Book Launch with Author Raif Shwayri: “Beirut on the Bayou: Alfred Nicola, Louisiana, and the Making of Modern Lebanon” 6:00 PM

**June 9:** Panel Discussion and Food Tasting: “Food and Identity: Celebrating Lebanese Cuisine in New York” 6:00 PM

### Courses

**June 6- July 15:** Arabic Language Courses

**For more information, please contact:**

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## LAU matters

*LAU Matters* is published quarterly by the New York Headquarters and Academic Center of Lebanese American University and distributed free of charge to alumni, friends and supporters of the university in North America.

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Cover Photo: Safwan Masri and Ted Purinton discuss the merits and drawbacks of branch campuses with Dr. Lina Beydoun.



## LAU goes to Wharton MENA Conference

Dr. Lina Beydoun, academic executive director of the LAU New York Academic Center, joined prominent practitioners, thought leaders, academics and entrepreneurs on April 9 at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Wharton School of Business MENA Conference, held at the University of Pennsylvania.

The day-long event tackled the latest developments in fields like energy, entrepreneurship, real estate, and healthcare. Beydoun spoke in a panel on “Youth and Employment.” She touted the region’s prospects, stating that vast numbers of young people will mean an unprecedented talent pool to create and innovate.

While the MENA region continues to show staggering youth unemployment rates, experts say a lack of education is not the issue, but rather other factors like a “skills mismatch,” an over-reliance on family connections to get jobs, and a lack of opportunities in the private sector, to name a few.

“It’s a mistake to constantly associate the youth bulge with unemployment,” said Beydoun. “When you have a large youth population, there’s a huge potential for creativity and entrepreneurship. If that talent can be put to use, with the support of local governments, then the youth bulge could be seen as a positive factor,” she explained. “In Lebanon, for example, if the government supports social entrepreneurship, youth could provide the answer to solving many of the country’s entrenched infrastructure problems, such as waste disposal, electricity shortages, Internet bandwidth and more.”

Universities play a key role in helping young people find employment. Beydoun stressed that LAU helps pave way for youth employment by teaching students essential skills for the job market, such as critical thinking, English language skills, and

by offering study abroad programs, which give students a global perspective. According to a recent study by the Adnan Kassar School of Business, 78 percent of its graduates were employed after graduation.

Prospects for youth employment across the MENA region are also handicapped by a glaring gender gap — 13 of the 15 countries with the lowest rates of women participating in their labor force are in the MENA region, according to the 2015 Global Gender Gap Report.

Alumnus Christian Oussi, Jr. (B.S. ’11) is currently an M.B.A. student at Wharton and helped organize the event. “I felt it was important for people to know what the region is about, to be aware of its diversity and to learn about the values that people stand for and which are being misrepresented in the media and are being hijacked by certain fringe groups,” he said.



## Connecting Through Dance

On April 28, LAU NY welcomed FJK Dance for an evening of “Connecting Through Dance: The Art of Fusing Various Dance Styles.” Nine talented and established dancers, hailing from countries as diverse as Italy, Cuba, Mexico and Turkey, wowed the audience with their ability to harmoniously blend Middle-Eastern folkloric dance with classical ballet, modern, jazz, and ballroom, creating a new dance language that is unique the world over.

In between dances, company founder Fadi J. Khoury explained the origins of certain middle eastern dance moves, and how his love of that culture, developed during his childhood years in Lebanon and Iraq, was the inspiration for FJK’s choreography. “Growing up in conflict zones, I found solace in dance, music, and art,” Khoury says. “The Middle East is not just about conflict. There is beauty and passion, and it’s my goal to show this through my work.” A closing performance of *Dum Tak* had the audience swaying in their seats.





# USAID and LAU Honor Students for Their Service

The United States Agency for International Development, together with LAU, honored 71 University Scholarship Program (USP) students in a “Spirit of Service” ceremony in Beirut on April 13.

The University Scholarship Program is funded by USAID and supports academically meritorious public high school students who would otherwise be unable to afford quality higher education in Lebanon. Scholars are required to be actively engaged in community service through participation in a community-based project, leadership activities, or voluntary initiatives with local organizations in their hometowns.

“It is my utmost pleasure to be here with you today on this occasion, the occasion of giving in order to accomplish positive change,” said USAID Mission Director Carolyn Bryan at the ceremony, emphasizing that volunteerism creates a healthy community and spreads the spirit of service, thus constituting a

shared value between the American and the Lebanese people. Quoting Gandhi, she added, “the best method to find oneself is to sacrifice yourself in the service of others.”

President Jabbra saluted the scholars for their generosity in creating and offering opportunities for people who did not have them, “so that they are able to serve their society, their country and their global village,” he said, emphasizing that LAU is unique in its collective spirit to improve the lives of others.

Since the inception of the USP program in 2010, USAID has invested about \$64 million to fund the university education of 600 students coming from all of Lebanon’s 26 districts, providing a comprehensive scholarship package that includes full undergraduate tuition, up to one year of intensive English courses, stipends, a book allowance, medical insurance and a laptop.

Save the Date 9.9.16

5<sup>th</sup> Annual *Gala*

Presented by LAU New York  
Metropolitan Club, New York City

All proceeds from the 5th Annual Gala will go to benefit the  
*Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World*, housed at LAU Beirut.

Established in 1973, the Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World is committed to pioneering academic research on women in the MENA region. It seeks to empower women through development programs and education, and to serve as a catalyst for policy change. IWSAW works with national, regional, and international organizations and universities concerned with women’s and gender issues. Development projects include supporting female candidates in local elections, capacity building for law enforcement personnel, training social workers to teach ‘basic living skills’, such as health and sanitation, to women in rural areas, and more.

IWSAW has recently launched a master’s degree in Women’s and Gender Studies, the first of its kind in Lebanon. This graduate program aims to generate a cadre of young, dynamic, qualified researchers in the field.

The institute also produces a flagship interdisciplinary journal Al-Raida, which has addressed gender in historical and contemporary contexts since 1976..

**Special Honorees**

**Rosalind Elias**  
Renowned international opera star

**Ambassador Edward Gabriel**  
Former ambassador to Morocco and founding member of American Task Force for Lebanon

**Joseph Maroun**  
Former member of LAU Board of Trustees, entrepreneur and humanitarian

**Entertainment**

**Emcee**  
ART Talk Show Host Rita Zihenni

**Musical Entertainment**  
Lebanese-American tenor Amine J. Hachem and pianist Brian Holman

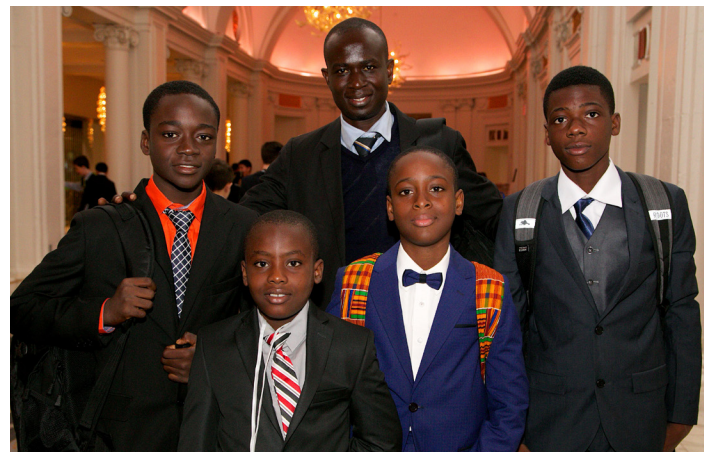
LAU Gala | 5





# International Model United Nations Conferences

There is but one opportunity for leaders of the world to come together and discuss issues that affect the world and its inhabitants: the annual United Nations General Assembly meeting, held each September at UN headquarters. But this past spring, 3,682 student delegates from around the globe had the chance to experience that unique melding of cultures at the Global Classrooms International Model United Nations conferences in New York. The three-day conferences in March and May were run by LAU and brought together 1,724 middle school students and 1,958 high school students, representing more than 30 countries, from Ghana to South Korea, to Turkey and Panama. The ‘delegates’ debated on behalf of their assigned country, formed alliances with other member-states, drafted and voted on resolutions, and made some new friends in the process.





# LAU alumni



## Future Alumni Spotlight: Lynn Gemayel

This year, one lucky and deserving LAU student is braving the New York winter to spend a semester studying in the Big Apple, thanks to a scholarship from a generous donor.

Lynn Gemayel arrived to New York City having never lived away from home. She now lives in a co-ed dorm in the city’s Harlem neighborhood, takes the subway to class, and navigates the streets of the 18 million-strong metropolis like a native.

“The idea for a study abroad scholarship came about over a series of conversations between President Jabbra and the donor, who wanted one student to get a real ‘New York experience’” said Vice President of University Advancement Marla Rice-Evans, referring to donor Joseph Audi, chairman and CEO of Interaudi Bank.

LAU’s Office of International Services then set out to find just the right candidate. While a high GPA was a must, there was more to it than that.

“What struck me about Lynn’s application was her involvement with the community through her participation in L’Association des Guides du Liban, and at LAU, through her work to found the Consulting Club,” said Jordan Srour, faculty International Initiatives coordinator.

New York City was the obvious choice, due to the vast array of opportunities the teeming city offers, and the ability to have a second home at LAU’s New York Headquarters and Academic Center. Having the chance to form a relationship with the donor was another plus.

“Spending a day in New York can change your life, spending six months can change your life forever,” said Audi. “I came here when I was young and it transformed my life, so if I can give that opportunity to others, I will,” he said.

“While we have had students go to New York for courses or conferences, this is the first time we have a student attend a university based in New York for a full semester,” said Vice President of Student Development and Enrollment Management Dr. Elise Salem.

The Office of International Services strives to provide LAU students with opportunities that challenge their character, says OIS Study Abroad Coordinator Dina Abdul Rahman. The university has dozens of international partners in Europe, the U.S., and Canada, and over the span of four years, has exchanged more than 170 students.

Gemayel will be continuing her economics studies at The City University of New York until June, while also expanding her horizons outside the classroom.

“I hope to meet as many people as I can from all over the globe,” she said. “I also want to see as many places as I can; other states, and even other countries.”

Meanwhile, the Office of International Services is working to expand such opportunities for other promising students like Gemayel.

“The cost of sponsoring a student like Lynn for a semester is quite small compared to the lifelong impact this will have,” said Srour. “Eventually, it would be wonderful to have students at a variety of schools throughout the U.S. What better way to really put the “American” in LAU than to give as many students as possible the chance to study at American universities.”

# LAU alumni events

## Tampa



West coast Florida alumni got together for lunch at Brio Tuscan Grille in Tampa, FL on Sunday, March 13. (From left to right) Dr. William Kurban; Lara Asmar Kurban; Ed Shiner; Dr. Lyna El Khoury Rumbargher; Dale Rumbargher; Paige Kollock; Chad Chaar.

## Toronto



1) Alumni and friends from the Toronto Chapter gather for their annual dinner on March 5 at Mazza Garden Restaurant in Ajax, Ontario; 2) Presidents past and present! (From left to right) Samer Andary, Georges Ayoub, Dina Jidaa (current president), May Sarout, Ed Shiner (Director of Alumni and Special Projects in N. America), Fadi Allos.

## West Palm Beach



East coast Florida alumni gather for dinner at E.R.Bradley’s Bar & Grill in West Palm Beach, FL on Saturday, March 12. (From left to right) Sally Andary; Elie Andary; Ed Shiner; Paige Kollock; Rabih Nehme; Michael Mcaar; Solange Mcaar.

## Montreal



On April 1, alumni chapters from various Lebanese universities held their first-ever joint networking event at Vargas Steakhouse in Montreal. The event drew more than 100 participants. (From left to right) chapter presidents: Maral Abajian Younes (Notre Dame University – Louaize), Rami Zein (LAU), Basma Neaime (Université Saint-Joseph), Shada Salman (AUB).

## UPCOMING ALUMNI EVENTS

**May 20:** Detroit Alumni Chapter Spring Dinner, Al-Ameer Restaurant, Canton MI

**June 5:** Washington, D.C. Alumni Chapter Family Picnic

**June 5:** Toronto Alumni Chapter Annual Breakfast in the Park

**July 12-15:** Alumni Homecoming in Byblos and Beirut

If your alumni chapter has an upcoming event, please notify:  
**Ed Shiner, Director of Alumni and Special Projects,**  
**(646) 255-1099, ed.shiner@lau.edu**



# Reasons to GIVE

LAU Matters talks to  
Abdo Ghie, Assistant Vice  
President for Enrollment  
Management



### What are the different types of financial aid LAU offers?

LAU offers two types of assistance: scholarships based on academic performance and financial aid based on need. We have several different scholarships available, including some that pay full tuition. Financial aid packages are determined based on

need and can provide anywhere from 15 percent to 50 percent of tuition. It’s also possible for students to receive a combination of scholarships and financial aid.

### Are we seeing changes in student demographics, and are those changes effecting the number of students requiring financial assistance?

Among applicants to LAU, the need for financial aid has dramatically increased. The economy in Lebanon is depressed, employees are accepting lower salaries and many employers are not paying salaries on time. With the unstable political situation in the MENA region, many people have less money. For all of these reasons, the need for financial aid has increased. As an example, in recent years we’ve experienced a 30 percent increase in the number of highly qualified applicants who are in need of financial assistance. We’ve been able to accept many of these outstanding students thanks to LAU’s ability to offer outstanding combinations of scholarships and financial aid.

### Why is now a critical time to support LAU?

The political and economic circumstances I’ve mentioned put an unprecedented stress on everyone’s finances, and on our financial aid and scholarships budget. At LAU, we believe all deserving students should be given the opportunity to benefit from a university education, regardless of their financial circumstances. Gifts from our alumni and friends are an important source of funds for student financial aid. In light of the current situation in Lebanon and the region, this financial support is more important to us – and our students – than ever.

### LAU has world-renown Model United Nations and Model Arab League programs. What is the university doing to ensure continued success for these young leaders?

We have created MUN and MAL scholarships ranging from 25 percent to 50 percent of tuition. These scholarships are on top of whatever financial aid these young leaders may receive.

### LAU’s health sciences schools are producing top doctors, nurses and pharmacists. How can the university help level the playing field for aspiring health professionals from all socio-economic backgrounds?

The university can help by offering scholarships and financial aid packages of various levels, especially to bright students from rural and economically disadvantaged far areas across Lebanon.

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in Tunisia and Turkey, thanks to Columbia’s global centers in those two countries.

He said Columbia has purposely stayed away from opening a branch campus in the Middle East, even though the university was asked to do so by several entities.

“It’s a very difficult model to sustain. It’s difficult to maintain quality faculty and the same level of education,” he explained. “After all, part of your experience at Columbia University is what you learn outside the classroom, in the wider campus that is New York City.”

Questions were also raised about the long-term sustainability of branch campuses of American institutions, such as Georgetown, Northwestern, Carnegie Mellon, and New York University, and how those outposts compare to historic institutions like LAU, AUB and AUC.



Safwan Masri with Lisa Anderson, former president of the American University in Cairo, and Susan Peters, president of ABANA.



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*“I think every American seeks a connection with their ethnic roots, and LAU NY has provided me with the means to feel connected.”*

## Lloyd Baroody

### What is your connection to Lebanon?

I consider myself a Lebanese-American because I was born in the U.S., my father was Lebanese and my mother was American. When I was 17, I was first introduced to my Lebanese relatives. It was culture shock for me the first time I went to Lebanon, as I had never been out of the United States. I remember the smells of the souks, chaos everywhere, and the beautiful women, not necessarily in that order. Ever since, I have been visiting Lebanon almost every year. My favorite things about Lebanon are the food, the wine of the Bekaa Valley and the hospitality of the Lebanese people.

### What do you do professionally?

I consider myself an entrepreneur. I have had at least five careers and am now seeking my next one. My greatest success was starting a company that performed clinical trials for pharmaceutical and

biotech companies. I co-founded the business in the basement of my home in New Jersey, and 10 years later sold it to a Fortune 500 company. I guess one can say I lived the American dream.

### To what do you attribute your success?

A great education was absolutely the foundation for my success. I was fortunate enough to have parents who encouraged their children to get the finest education, and paid for it. For me, it involved going to McGill University and Harvard Business School. I learned discipline, how to focus and how to compete with some of the best students. I did the same for my kids, and I have witnessed their own personal development and professional success as a result.

I am also a bit of a risk-taker, in terms of not being afraid to go down paths which

have a lot of unknowns and would make many people a bit uncomfortable. I live by the motto that I would rather regret what I do rather than what I didn't do.

### What do you like about LAU?

I had never heard of LAU until they made the scene in New York City several years ago. The New York campus hosts many cultural events which have given me exposure to all things Lebanese without having to travel very far. The lectures, films, artistic and culinary events have not only further enriched my life, but have given me a sort of Lebanese pride. I think every American seeks a connection with their ethnic roots, and LAU NY has provided me with the means to feel connected.