

July 30, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you are all having a safe and restful summer. As we prepare to begin a new academic year, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the one that has just ended. As you know, AY 2019-20 is the year that concludes AUC's centennial celebrations. As we have now kicked-off the "AUC Next 100" this is the ideal time to look forward as we reflect on the past.

This has been a year unlike any that we have experienced before. And yet despite the disruptions and the uncertainties brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, AUC has continued to thrive and we have many successes to celebrate. This message highlights some of the many amazing achievements of AUC's faculty and students in AY2019-20.

People Make AUC

AUC would not be who we are without our amazing faculty and staff. It is your commitment to our students, to the ideals of liberal arts education and to expanding access to knowledge through your ongoing research and professional practice that make AUC a truly unique institution.

We are about to complete an extremely successful hiring season for new faculty who will be joining us in AY 2020-21. While some hires are still being finalized, we have to-date hired 28 new faculty, 61% of whom are international. Of these, 24 were our first-choice candidates, and 4 were our second choice. Once again, we have achieved our strategic objective of 100% of faculty hires representing our top two choices.

AUC continues to invest in mentoring and developing our faculty. In response to the recommendations of the Provost's Advisory Committee for Review of Tenure Process and the Provost's Task Force on Promotion and Tenure, we are working with departments on developing a new well-defined university-wide faculty mentoring program to ensure effective, continuous professional development is taking place within the department. In Fall 2019, the Center for Learning and Teaching (CLT) provided services to over 280 faculty, which included pedagogical and educational technology consultations, workshops and other support services. The purpose of these activities is to empower faculty to create a stimulating learning environment by promoting excellence in teaching, exploring new pedagogies, and facilitating the effective application of technology to the teaching and learning process. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, we were proactive in our responses and were the first institution in Egypt to decide to shift to remote and online learning. Ahead of this decision, we trained 540 faculty members on BlackBoard and Panopto lecture capture, in addition to developing a comprehensive web resource. It was precisely this proactivity that enabled our students to complete the Spring 2020 semester.

CLT continued to provide full support to faculty throughout the spring and summer semesters with 28 online workshops and over 166 faculty members attending these sessions. CLT launched a fully online learning resource for summer teaching faculty “*Preparing to Design your Summer 2020 Course for Online Instruction*” where 145 summer teaching faculty were enrolled. This was coupled with a “Preparing for Summer Online Teaching Institute” with 80 summer teaching faculty attending. This led to an amazingly successful Summer semester of online learning, with a 41% increase in enrollments compared to Summer 2019. Similar ongoing plans are in place for all Fall 2020 teaching faculty; as of this writing, an additional 240 faculty are attending the Fall 2020 Preparation Institute.

We are extremely proud of the accomplishments of all of our faculty. In addition to publications, grants, and internal-AUC awards, many of our faculty are also recognized by external entities for their noteworthy achievements. To honor these achievements, the Office of the Provost has added a new webpage dedicated to the [national and global recognition of AUC faculty](#). The Office of the Provost will be reaching out to faculty with guidelines on how to share this information with us for inclusion on this new page.

This past year we expanded activities for capacity-building, supporting, and empowering our academic leaders. At the start of the school year, we held the second annual Department Chairs' Orientation. This event provided department leaders with much-needed information and useful resources to assist them in their work as academic leaders of their departments/programs. We also held numerous meetings of the Academic Leadership Forum (ALF), which was established in 2018 to bring Deans, Associate Deans, Chairs and Associate Chairs together regularly to learn, share and discuss a range of academic issues and initiatives. I look forward to continuing these meetings of the ALF in AY 2020-21, and to welcoming the 6 newly appointed chairs and 2 new Associate Deans who have recently assumed these roles.

In AY 2019-20 we developed a process for comprehensive reappointment reviews for Deans. This provides the opportunity for faculty and other constituencies to give constructive input and provide data to the Provost to make a well-informed decision on renewing a Dean's term. The implementation of the process started in Spring 2020. We also developed guidelines for the appointment and review of Department Chairs. A performance review of each department chair is now conducted in the final year of their three-year term. Also, and in coordination with SMIE, each Chair receives an annual chair evaluation report to provide them feedback and help them understand how they may more effectively support the work of the department.

I am delighted to announce that we have concluded 2 critical searches, for the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUSS) and the Dean of Libraries and Learning Technologies (LLT). As I shared recently in detailed emails to the AUC Community, Dr. Daniel Ortiz will join AUC as our new Dean of Libraries and Learning Technologies this September, and Dr. John Meloy will assume the position of Dean of HUSS in July 2021.

As part of our ongoing efforts to invest in and build the capacity of our faculty and staff, we have recently established a partnership with Academic Impressions, a group that provides extensive online leadership and professional development resources specifically for colleges and universities. While many institutions are cutting back these expenditures during these difficult times, we have made a strong commitment to continue to invest in our faculty and staff's development. In the past few days, we invited all new Department Chairs to attend a

session on "Your First Year as Department Chair: Building Trust, Communication, and Community" and outgoing Chairs were invited to a session entitled "Returning to Research: Preparing Your Transition from Chair to Faculty." We will continue to offer developmental opportunities for our academic leaders.

I literally cannot say "thank you" enough, and I cannot overemphasize the need for all of you to do your best to take care of yourselves and your families at this time. AUC is about its people and I am proud to be a member of this great community; a community that came together and showed "selflessness, ingenuity, and dedication" as described by the AUC Board of Trustees in its [May 2020 statement of appreciation](#).

Transforming Our Learning Environment

AUC continues to be the destination of choice for many students in Egypt, the region, and the world. For the past academic year, we received 3495 undergraduate applications (including transfer students). For freshman applicants, our selectivity was 47% with an enrollment yield of 76%. At the graduate school level, we received 1,135 applications. Our graduate selectivity rate was 55%, with a yield of 52%. A quick look at our Fall 2020 admissions is extremely promising, with a total of 3763 applications received to-date.

Student financial support is intended to *nurture and direct students to focus on their success*. A total of 2,437 undergraduate students received financial support from AUC in Fall 2019 and 2406 in Spring 2020 - representing an average of 45% of the AUC undergraduate student body. More than half of our graduate students received tuition support in the form of graduate fellowships, with 496 students receiving Fellowships in Fall 2019, and 521 recipients in Spring 2020.

AUC remains deeply committed to providing such financial support to students who might not otherwise be able to enroll at AUC. We are extremely grateful to our partners who help enable us to provide this support. This past year we were awarded over \$43 million in multi-year grants to support a range of fellowship and scholarships. These include the USAID-funded Scholars Program, the Tomorrow's Leaders Programs for Middle Eastern students at the undergraduate and graduate levels funded by the US Department of State, the Sawiris Undergraduate Scholarships for Students with Disabilities, and support for Yemeni students from the Hadramout Foundation. Our commitment combined with the generosity of our friends allows us to truly focus on efforts to attract and retain the most promising and capable students.

AUC continues to focus on enhancing our ability to attract high caliber students through continuous review of our admission, enrollment, and financial aid policies and procedures. Last summer we established two task forces, to examine critical issues related to financial support and "declaration from the gate." The first of these, chaired by Dr. Ahmed Tolba, was asked to look at options regarding how to restructure our approach to financial aid. Following extensive research, this group made several recommendations on a range of topics including the balance between need-based aid and merit-scholarships, adapting our application and allocation processes, and the ways we market our scholarship information. The second task force, chaired by Dr. Michelle Henry, explored options for extending our "declaration at the gate" policy, which is now limited to programs in SSE. Their analysis included market research studies,

AUC student surveys and practices at peer institutions, among other things. The recommendations of this task force focused on some options that would allow AUC to admit students with either declared or undeclared status. We are now in the process of reviewing the recommendations of both task forces, and devising an action plan to enhance the ways we recruit, admit and support our students through the admissions process and beyond.

In addition to supporting students with scholarships and fellowships, AUC also offers grants and awards to allow students to participate in multiple research, travel, and internship opportunities; this year, 99 of our undergraduate students received such funding. At the graduate level, we provided 118 students with support grants for conferences, research, and study abroad. We call on all faculty to take every opportunity possible to involve undergraduate students in your research.

This past year we continued to expand our partnerships with international higher education institutions. We established 29 new partnerships. This 15% increase over last year brings our total number of international partner institutions to 221. These partnerships play a critical role in our strategic objective of increased internationalization, by bringing international students to study at AUC and providing mobility opportunities for our students, staff, and faculty.

AUC continues to be at the forefront both in terms of quality of education and educational innovation. We are moving forward as planned to enhance the learning spaces at AUC. We have identified and schematically designed a series of pilot projects as the first stage of implementation. These include pilot classrooms, a pedagogy and technology innovation lab, redesign of the Library Learning Commons, in addition to six pilot informal learning spaces. These pilots have been strategically identified to present a range of learning settings, which is increasingly important on a university campus where all spaces must be seen as potential spaces for learning.

Our commitment to quality education is anchored in our commitment to continuous improvement. Toward this end, the Office of the Associate Provost for Assessment and Accreditation has developed and launched an academic program review process that ensures each degree program at AUC is reviewed once every six years to enhance academic quality, enrich student experiences, and ensure that resources are used efficiently and allocated to support AUC's mission and strategic objectives. A comprehensive review of seven programs offered by the Departments of Accounting, Law, Physics, and Political Science was conducted in Spring 2020. Ten programs are scheduled for review during the Fall 2020 and a further ten will be reviewed in Spring 2021.

The liberal arts philosophy is at the heart of AUC's education. Beyond any doubt, this enhances the employability of our students. This is why, for example, the Department of Management has this past year designed three new undergraduate programs in business and entrepreneurship, finance, and marketing. These programs are all being introduced in the 2020/2021 catalog. Moreover, the Department of Accounting is introducing a financial literacy course into our Core Curriculum. The School of Business will also introduce the Co-Op program, the first in the region hosted by a business school; students in this program will be engaged on a full-time basis for at least 6 months with external entities. These include but are not limited to multinational-corporations, start-ups, financial institutions, governmental entities, professional services firms, and non-profit organizations.

In higher education, the quality of an institution's education is verified via external accreditation. This past fall AUC hosted a visiting team from Egypt's national accreditation body, the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE). The team met with representatives and stakeholders from every AUC school, as well as members of AUC's academic and administrative leadership. The visit was coordinated by SMIE, in collaboration with Dr. Basil Kamel, Dr. Ezzat Fahmy, and Dr. Atta Gebril. Following this visit, NAQAAE announced that it was reaffirming AUC's accreditation. AUC is the first (and to-date only) university in Egypt to be accredited at the institutional level by NAQAAE. Earlier this year, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), AUC's US-based accrediting body, officially recognized AUC as a provider of distance-learning, in addition to our traditional classroom-based instruction.

Several AUC schools and programs have also received recognition by various international accreditation bodies. This year the School of Business earned its EFMD Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) 3-year re-accreditation, after undergoing the rigorous evaluation by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) peer review team. Additionally, the School of Business has completed the European Foundation for Management Development's (EFMD) first comprehensive impact assessment tool for business schools, the Business School Impact System (BSIS), and received the BSIS label which demonstrates and acknowledges the impact of the school. The School of Continuing Education was granted a five-year reaccreditation by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training. Our Bachelor of Science in Petroleum Engineering received accreditation from the Engineering Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). AUC's Architectural Engineering Program was awarded a five-year revalidation by the UNESCO/UIA (International Union of Architects).

Like many higher education institutions, we face pressures to participate in global rankings. However, we must do so with the right perspective. Each set of rankings uses its own criteria, and it's impossible to align a university's vision and mission with a single ranking body. AUC has decided to participate in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) rankings. Although our overall ranking went down this year compared to last year, our standing is still impressive. Two of the most important indicators in QS rankings are "Academic Reputation" and "Citations per Faculty." In these areas, AUC's maintained its score (with no increase or decrease) from the previous year. What all of this tells us is that we need to put a dedicated focus on addressing these issues, as we strive for continuous improvement. I am forming a Standing Committee on Rankings, to be led by Associate Provost for Assessment and Accreditation, Dr. Zeinab Amin. The role of this committee, whose work is expected to commence in Fall 2020, is to recommend an initiative which will enhance AUC's rankings without detracting in any way from our main mission or vision.

Nothing speaks to the quality of an AUC education louder than the achievements and success of our amazing students. Below are just a few of the accomplishments and recognition that AUC students received last year:

- [All 14 position papers submitted by the AUC team to the Chicago International Model United Nations \(CIMUN\) won prizes for best position papers.](#)
- [An AUC Film major was one of 10 winners of the Ladima Foundation African Women in the Time of COVID-19 Short Film Competition.](#)

- [A case study submitted by AUC's School of Business El-Khazindar Business Research and Case Center won the European Foundation for Management Development \(EFMD\) Case Writing Competition's Family Business category.](#)
- [A graduate student in environmental engineering received the STEM Star of the Year award at EGYPS \(Egypt Petroleum Show\). The Highly Commended award in the same category went to an AUC double major in mechanical engineering and physics.](#)
- [A group of AUC students won second place in the Analytical Performance category at the SensUs 2019 competition at the Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands.](#)
- [Five AUC students won first place at the Student Mechanism and Robot Design Competition, held by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, in Anaheim, California.](#)

The AUC Library plays a vital role in keeping AUC firmly on the international stage. Our Rare Books and Special Collections Library (RBSCL) is one of the principal contributors to The Council on Library and Information Resources' (CLIR) and Stanford Libraries' just-released [Digital Library of the Middle East \(DLME\)](#), which aims to become one of the world's largest online archives of Middle Eastern and North African artifacts. Through its ongoing programs, DLME aggregates digital records of published materials, documents, maps, artifacts, audiovisual recordings, and more from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Featured in the RBSCL's Digital Library are over 5,000 selections from the collections of vintage photographs and other documents. Other participants include the libraries of Cambridge University, the American University in Beirut, Harvard University, and the British Library.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it a world of uncertainties. Despite a wealth of unknowns, we had to proceed with making plans for the Fall 2020 semester. As part of the President's Operational Excellence Initiative, I established a committee to explore and recommend options for the Fall semester, led by Dr. Ahmed Tolba. The committee conducted extensive research into a range of options, in collaboration with many of the other Operational Excellence Committees and stakeholders from across the university. Their top guiding principles were the health and safety of the AUC community and maintaining our quality of education. This committee's exhaustive analysis included: health and safety requirements, global trends and models, physical and operational capacity, course requirements, and student and faculty input via surveys and focus groups. As you are by now well aware, based on the recommendations of this committee we will be starting Fall 2020 with a limited number of classes having campus-based, face-to-face components, and the majority of our classes being conducted online.

In addition to the Fall 2020 Planning Committee, I established another committee as part of the Operational Excellence Initiative – the Academics at AUC post-COVID-19 Committee, chaired by Professor Ayman Ismail. Its name notwithstanding, the mandate of this committee is not exclusively about the pandemic. Rather, it is looking at a range of longer-term implications for our academic programs, in areas such as labor market needs, impact on learning and teaching, programmatic shifts, the adaptation of new technologies, internationalization, and other related areas. The work of this committee, which is driven by stakeholder engagement, will play a pivotal role in the strategic directions that we take as an institution in the coming years.

Last February you were introduced to Beyer, Blinder, and Belle (BBB), the firm that is working with us to develop plans for the continued development of our New Cairo campus. Although most of us have not been on campus for many months, individuals from across the university are continuing to engage with BBB to imagine and plan the future of every element of the campus - from school buildings, administrative spaces, out-door areas, dormitories, and faculty residences. This speaks to our commitment to AUC's ongoing strengths for the next 100 years and beyond. There are currently 2 committees working closely with BBB. The Steering Committee is led by Dr. Basil Kamel, and the Executive Committee led by Dr. Aziza Ellozy. I'm asking faculty to please reach out to Dr. Kamel and to share specific space needs of anticipated futuristic academic programs.

Expanding Our Research Enterprise

In AY 2019-20 we continued to see significant growth in the research outputs of our faculty, as well as recognition for publications put out directly by AUC's schools.

In 2019, our faculty published 326 peer-reviewed articles. This represents an 11% increase compared to 2017, and a 3% increase over 2018. The quality of those publications has also increased significantly. Of the 326 articles, 294 were published in top journals, representing an increase of 42% compared to 2017, and a 45% increase from 2018. One of the important indicators used by QS Rankings is "citations per faculty." The university is focusing on improving the faculty productivity in highly regarded journals and to enhance the citations per faculty, hence organically enhancing our ranking.

In FY20, our faculty and staff, with the great support of the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP), secured a total of \$51.7 million, which is 29% higher than what we achieved in FY19. Of these funds, \$3.5 million were for research grants – an increase of 20% from the previous year. In FY21, the OSP and the Office of the Associate Provost for Research, Innovation, and Creativity (AP-RIC), will emphasize and focus on increasing research funding.

In AY 2019-20 AUC supported faculty with 99 Conference Travel Grants and 35 Research Grants. We also brought external expertise to AUC by providing academic departments with grants to host three Distinguished Visiting Professors, eight Distinguished Visiting Researchers, and two Artists-in-Residence.

Last year we introduced the Bartlett Fund for Critical Challenges. In its second cycle, twice as many proposals were submitted than last year. Two major projects of potentially high impact on Egypt's critical challenges have been selected, with a combined budget of \$165k. "Environmental Levels, Exposure, and Removal of Agrochemicals in Egyptian Waters" was submitted by Dr. Anwar Abdelnasser from the Public Health Institute as a PI. His team includes Dr. Mayada El-Sayed and Dr. Tamer Shoeib from the Chemistry Department. "Surviving Cancer to Die of Heart Disease - predicting when stopping this killer disease will stop hearts" was submitted by Dr. Mohamed El-Morsi from the Mechanical Engineering Department as a PI, and a team of three other researchers: Dr. Khalil Elkhodary, Mechanical Engineering Department, Dr. Mostafa Yousef, Mechanical Engineering Department and Dr. Karim Seddik from the Electronics and Communication Engineering Department.

Soon after we made the shift in our mode of teaching in response to COVID-19, we launched the Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Research Initiative. AUC faculty of all disciplines were invited to submit proposals. The call was goal-driven, crisis-centered, fast-tracked, and biased towards impactful, multidisciplinary projects. The purpose of this fund is to enable AUC faculty to make contributions to global knowledge through studying and researching the pandemic crisis and its consequences from many diverse lenses. Twenty-five proposals were received from all schools, addressing diverse aspects of the crisis, 10 of which we selected for funding.

In addition to the extensive research output of AUC faculty, the University supports a number of journals/publications. These include The Cairo Review and Arab Media and Society, both published by GAPP, and Alif Journal of Comparative Poetics produced by HUSS. Two of these publications, Arab Media and Society and Alif, were both approved this year for inclusion in Scopus, the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed journals.

Another significant enhancement of the way our research, intellectual and artistic output is highlighted and made visible is the Digital Commons (DC) initiative, which is a joint effort by the Office of the AP-RIC and the AUC Library. Digital Commons is a comprehensive tool that acts as a repository for our output of images, movies, plays, recordings, multimedia, unique documents, exhibitions, historical collections, and original publications (books, journals, and conferences). It hosts more than 2 million works from 530 institutions. It contributes to the recognition and viewership of everything produced by AUC. In addition to being a platform, it has built-in features and metrics systems to demonstrate the impact of our collection. DC makes sure all our work is discoverable online and in one place, raising the visibility of our contributions which can indirectly affect the reputation indicator in the ranking systems. It also provides a monthly readership report that can be sent out to funding organizations. Through the DC Initiative, AUC Knowledge Fountain (Fount) has been established and launched as the new AUC Repository, replacing its predecessor DAR. Migration of data started in Spring 2020, and population and digitization activities will continue as a 3-years program.

Fostering Our Impact on Egypt and Beyond

While AUC's commitment to serving our students is unwavering, we are also deeply committed to engaging with our local communities, in Egypt, and across the region. Much of this is being led by our Extended and Executive Education programs.

Some examples of these activities highlight our role in supporting access to the English language. The Annual Nile TESOL (Teachers of English as a Second Language) conference was once again organized by our School of Continuing Education. It drew over 3,000 participants from across Egypt and the MENA region to our New Cairo campus in January 2020. SCE also co-sponsored and hosted the International Language Assessment Conference in Egypt (ILACE) in September 2019, bringing over 1,000 participants to the Tahrir campus. SCE was awarded several projects by the US Embassy in Cairo including the English Access Microscholarship Program, English for Religious Purposes, Bridge Education for College Readiness, Mentors English Language program, and having an English Language Fellow in residence at SCE.

GAPP Executive Education has partnered with the Schools of Business and Science and Engineering Executive Education to train Egyptian government officials under the Leadership for Government Excellence Program, financed by the Government of Egypt. This past year 120 members of Egypt’s civil service received training, which is provided both by AUC and Kings College London. The purpose of this program is to enhance the efficiency of government by investing in human resources, competence-building and talent development in the public sector under the umbrella of Egypt’s Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (SDS) and the Administrative Reform Plan.

Our University Centers for Career Development (UCCD) grant is proceeding in launching UCCDs across the country. Thanks to the generous support of USAID, our colleagues at the Career Center, are overseeing the launch of 20 UCCDs across 12 Egyptian Universities supporting one million students in national universities to gain employability and career development skills. Last year, we launched UCCDs in Zagazig, Menoufia, and Aswan universities.

Once more, AUC took the lead to push the borders of having a Tobacco-Free Community. Egypt's Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Khaled Abdel Ghaffar [praised AUC's Tobacco-Free Community Policy](#), stating that he will present it to the Supreme Council of Universities to be implemented in all Egyptian universities starting next year. He added that AUC’s policy will be used as a model for planning and implementation.

One of this year’s most exciting achievements is the recent announcement by the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) that they are establishing the [J-PAL MENA Office at AUC](#), to be housed in our School of Business. J-PAL is a global research center headquartered at MIT, working to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. Anchored by a network of 194 affiliated professors at universities around the world, J-PAL conducts randomized impact evaluations to answer critical questions in the fight against poverty. There were previously 6 regional J-PAL offices, in North America, Latin America/Caribbean, Europe, Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, and the J-PAL MENA Office is the 7th Regional office. Seed funding to support the establishment of this new regional office is being provided by the Community Jameel Foundation.

Closing

I know that you, like me, are eager to return to life on campus. However, it is clear that whatever direction the pandemic takes, we are now equipped to address the unknown, thanks to the creativity, flexibility, and agility of our faculty. As we reflect on the achievements of the past year, I am extremely proud to say that it is our resilience that shines through. While the question of when we will resume campus-based teaching is at the forefront of most of our thoughts, we continue to look forward and creatively plan for the longer-term future as well.

In closing, I want to thank every member of the AUC community who makes us who we are. Our incredible faculty, our dedicated staff, our always-eager students, and our committed alumni and friends – collectively we make AUC thrive. This year only served to remind us of

the strength of this community. I am more confident than ever that together we will continue to achieve great things. To that end, I'd like to leave with a quote by Margret Wheatley that describes the strength of our community "There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."

Wishing you a restful summer, and a blessed, safe, and healthy Eid to you and your loved ones.

Sincerely,
Ehab Abdel Rahman, Provost