A decorative graphic in the top right corner consisting of a blue branch with several leaves, curving downwards and to the left.


Beirut, September 20, 2024

Message from the Rector as USJ Celebrates Its 150th Anniversary

LET US KEEP MAKING HISTORY...

We stand on the threshold of a remarkable milestone: our University, the Saint Joseph University of Beirut, is celebrating its 150th year. **We embrace this moment with fervent faith in its mission and a steadfast commitment to honoring its rich history and promising future.** To all our mission partners, students, instructors, administrative staff, logistical staff, and alumni, both longstanding and newly joined, I extend my heartfelt wishes for a year filled with hope. May this time serve as a beacon of renewal for our minds and hearts, bringing success to each one of you, and fulfilling the promises of a more vibrant, thriving, and united Lebanon. This hope has always been a cornerstone for our founders; it reminds us that we must not live merely in the echoes of past joys and sorrows, but must always believe in the power of Words and Life as symbols of promise and future. Despite the looming threats of conflict and ongoing crises, let us keep faith in the transformative power of our shared vision. As we reflect on our living memory, I wish to share some perspectives that make this special year for our University, here in Lebanon and the broader Middle East, profoundly meaningful.

1. One perspective shaping the **University's legacy is its unwavering commitment to advancing the Lebanese state**, its public administration, and its constitutional institutions, with the aim of empowering them to better serve their people, particularly the youth. We recognize the pressing political and social challenges that threaten the existence of our nation. Therefore, the civic mission of the Saint Joseph University is not merely an addition; it is a fundamental pillar of our identity and purpose. This mission enriches our work through scholarly pursuits, open scientific discourse, and social influence. It guides us in our pursuit of contributing to the country's progress and upholding the essence of our active engagement on this land. As we commemorate our 150th anniversary, we are called to action: to secure our role in shaping Lebanon's future, we must move beyond mere observation and become proactive agents of transformation. This call to action is embodied in our diverse initiatives, including the FDSP, ISP, FSR, the Training Academy for Citizenship, and others. The Philippe Salem Center for Political Studies will be a powerful catalyst in turning our aspirations into a reality for the Lebanon of tomorrow.
2. Moreover, **our vision for USJ embraces a renewed understanding of solidarity, reflecting our role in shaping Lebanon's present and future.** We are committed to allocating over 25% of our annual budget to support families and students in need of financial assistance for their education— a significant contribution from our community. Beyond financial aid, our mission includes supporting the educated, enlightened, and skilled Lebanese middle class. Over the past 150 years, our University has been instrumental in shaping and empowering this group to reclaim its pivotal role in shaping Lebanon's future. Another milestone for USJ is the expansion of its academic influence into new regions, including Dubai and *Côte d'Ivoire*, as well as the enhancement of its hospital network, with significant support from *Hôtel-Dieu de France* (HDF). Through this strategic expansion, USJ is not only fulfilling its symbolic responsibility to bolster healthcare institutions amid these challenging times but also enhancing the delivery of top-tier medical services.
3. Considering a third perspective, USJ celebrates its 150th anniversary **while stepping into a future that promises to be significantly different.** The future, marked by rapid digital transformation and unprecedented complexity, compels us to evolve. We are ready to embark on this next phase, fortified by our strong academic and institutional foundations. Our commitment to advancing digital transformation within USJ's administration and delivering innovative technology education is unwavering. The integration of artificial intelligence and data science into our academic programs is not just a vision but an active reality. As we approach our bicentennial, USJ faces critical challenges that must be addressed comprehensively.




4. In line with these perspectives, **the testimonials from our alumni and students affirm that a USJ degree remains one of the most esteemed choices for Lebanese youth.** We take great pride in this achievement. Our commitment to securing institutional and university accreditations has proven highly successful. Recent achievements underscore our unwavering commitment to excellence. The Saint Joseph University of Beirut has proudly secured AACSB accreditation for USJ Business School, Teptad accreditation for the Faculty of Medicine, and renewed ABET for the School of Engineering of Beirut. As we anticipate the upcoming renewal of the European ACQUIN accreditation for the entire university, our ongoing effort to attain American WSCUC accreditation requires collective commitment and cultural adaptation. This will guide USJ toward greater international recognition while remaining aligned with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (the Bologna Process). We are also dedicated to expanding our English-language programs, offering opportunities for students who wish to pursue their studies at a Jesuit institution.

5. In accordance with the plan set by the Board of Trustees and the University Board, and in light of the financial crisis that has shaken our country, **our economic and financial policy aims to achieve financial stability** and gradually restore purchasing power to pre-crisis levels of 2019. This is crucial as our annual budget primarily relies on tuition fees and financial aid for scholarships and university development. Despite the ongoing crisis, which continues to affect a significant portion of the population, we remain steadfast in our efforts. Major projects nearing completion, such as the new facilities for the Faculty of Medicine, the medical simulation center, photovoltaic energy initiatives, and others at USJ and HDF, could not have been realized without the generous contributions of major donors. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to these benefactors whose support inspires us to intensify our efforts through *Foundation USJ*. Their contributions fuel our commitment to fundraising and addressing the needs of our cherished Alma Mater.

6. The Saint Joseph University is poised for a promising future, **demonstrating a strong commitment to overcoming uncertainty.** This readiness is vividly reflected in our recent achievements and, especially, in our leadership in digital transformation. As one of the first universities in the country to advance in content development, dissemination methods, and digital platforms, our proactive approach, evident during the COVID crisis, demonstrates our commitment to innovation and readiness for the future. The University is well-positioned to tackle the challenges ahead. Over the past decade, we have proudly doubled our first-year student enrollment, while remaining true to our identity as a “modest” university. Our pedagogical duty to build personal connections and adhere to the principle of *cura personalis* - care for the individual - continues to define us. This commitment to a human-scale institution has served us well, allowing us to remain a warm and cohesive community, upholding an impeccable moral code and a profound sense of ethical strength. Preserving this exceptional quality remains our highest priority.

7. I must highlight USJ’s exceptional commitment to **healthcare, embodied in the remarkable recovery of our HDF, which has been serving generations of students from the Faculty of Medicine and other medical institutions since 1921.** We all share the responsibility of supporting its noble mission. In recent years, we have made significant progress, including major upgrades to patient care facilities, and improvements in institutional operations and human relations. These upgrades are vital for HDF’s effective functioning. We must acknowledge and express our deepest gratitude to all the medical and caregiving professionals who contribute to this mission. Our dedication to patient care, integral to our educational mission —two essential pillars of any nation, and especially of Lebanon—has expanded to include the Saint Charles Hospital - Fayadieh and Hospital MGR Cortbawi - Adma, as well as the management of several hospitals in Lebanon and Baghdad. Additionally, we are working on establishing a new USJ Faculty of Medicine in Cyprus with local partners. Despite the challenges, these efforts position USJ as a leading player in healthcare, driven by a community committed to success.

8. As we envision a brighter future, **our academic mission in scientific research** goes beyond budget considerations, which is among the largest in the country. It requires collective awareness from every institution and individual, as we must dedicate time and energy to produce and publish to the best of our abilities. Publishing research in highly competitive, indexed journals and revitalizing the scientific



role of our hospital, HDF, are crucial steps in reasserting our presence as a leading research university both nationally and internationally. This represents a significant challenge that we must address to ensure our impact matches our ambition, research goals, and focus on advanced studies. Simultaneously, we aim to enhance our regional standing by ranking among the best, building strong partnerships and alliances, and, ideally, establishing a physical presence in the region.

In conclusion, the path ahead is demanding. We face intense competition, a crowded field, limited resources, and unequal support compared to some national and regional universities, which USJ lacks. We need a detailed plan and the active involvement of all stakeholders at every decision-making level within the University. Time is a critical factor in our rapidly evolving world, and we have only a few years to achieve our goals.

In 2025, we will celebrate 150 years. Reflecting on our history, we find it characterized by struggle and perseverance. Our mission to educate and train has been upheld by our many educators, administrators, Jesuits, laypeople, men and women, students, and alumni. Together, they have played a crucial role in shaping and rebuilding our country, preparing the pioneers of tomorrow.

I would like to close with the words of an alumnus: “USJ has built a legacy of fairness, humanism, academic excellence, and a strong commitment to the common good. Preserve this heritage and strengthen it by boldly embracing the future. It is through this sense of belonging that everyone, whether working or studying at USJ, can achieve true success.”

Guided by passion and a commitment to excellence, previous generations have thrived in their mission of serving humanity. It is with the same passion that we will continue to forge ahead.



Prof. Salim Daccache, SJ,
Rector of the Saint Joseph University of Beirut