

FOUNDERS' DAY 2017
HAIGAZIAN UNIVERSITY, Beirut
Monday, October 16, 2017

President's Word

Excellencies, Mrs. Al-Hassan, colleagues and students, dear guests,

Even though teacher training programs had been established many years earlier, the first day of regular college classes here were held on October 17, 1955. Forty-three students, Armenians and Arabs registered from Lebanon and the neighboring countries to attend this liberal arts American style new college called HAIGAZIAN.

Dr. Armenag Haigazian, whose name we carry, was not the founder. In fact, as a most prominent Columbia and Yale-educated professor, theologian, Haigazian was one of the most prominent scholars of the region, as the NY Times reports (May 26, 1922), when announcing his death (that had happened in 1921) while being deported with other Armenians and Greeks into the Interior of Turkey. A victim of the Genocide.

We owe the founding of Haigazian University to three groups: the local Armenian Evangelical community in Beirut that saw the need for training leaders and educators; to the AMAA for catching the vision all the way from New York; and to two prominent businessmen, Stephen Philibosian and Stephen Mehagian, in Philadelphia and Phoenix respectively.

The true philanthropy of the founders, though led them to honor someone other than themselves, plant the seed of deeper values than the self, and not wish the college to carry their own name as generous donors. This is lesson one.

Both donors had left their town in Hadjin, Cilicia, at a very young age during the first years of the 20th century to join relatives in America and succeed in some business. Both had reached their initial goal. I believe that behind every dream, an Armenian, American or a Lebanese one, there is the goal of success in making profit. Dreams receive meaning with perseverance and action, and profit makes sense only if one knows what to do with what is gained, and how to utilize the

benefit. These founding people put their money where deeper and wider virtues would be shared. This is lesson two.

As the year 2017 is the 500th celebration of the Reformation, we cannot but remember that a certain protestant ethic is connected to our understanding of business, and all work. Work is a calling and a vocation. No work should be a spiritless technique of self-sustenance. Humans are not machines, nor statues. They are an active and creative soul of eternal depth. Luther believed that combining the sacred and the secular in work require a certain sense of vocation. So, all business should have the depth life deserves. This is lesson three.

I believe that the successes of the Business & Economics programs at Haigazian University, since the 1960s, are not accidental. We have believed that good values should shape educational journey and life careers.

We have been known for a very good business school in Lebanon. I wonder why. The most prominent economists never taught here. Most of the students did not inherit parents' large businesses to build upon. Our budget did not allow us to create internship programs in Geneva or Hong Kong. Our curriculum was not very different from those of many others in higher education.

I would like to believe that part of the success was the conscientiousness with which the professors taught, and the eagerness with which our students prepared themselves. The simple spirit, the task-oriented ethic, the sense of community, the wish to break economic, social, racial and religious barriers to reach any height, these were often evidenced here. And yes, our pride resides in the successes of our graduates, and they are in all levels of leadership here and abroad. Success in work is not a coincidence. It the result of good knowledge, relevant training, high standards, nurturing experiences, good friendships, and the wealth of a good heart.

Business is standards, methods, knowledge, training, relationships, teamwork, and more. And a good spirit, and a professional outlook are all required in this domain. Let us at Haigazian University continue to spread these ideas and we will continue to make a big difference.

Today, as we focus on the Business & Economics program, and as we celebrate our values, we want to challenge ourselves to be mindful of what makes business and the teaching of business a true human value, and we want to acknowledge all those who recognize the gifts of our students. This is why, a number of banks are represented as our academic family and their institutional families are joined in building society and a healthy work ethic.

Dear HU community, on this day, honor the virtues of the founders. Honor the memory of an exemplary victim of the Genocide. Honor the rich industrious heritage of your Lebanese space and culture. Honor yourselves by focusing on what is valuable, and on working hard to project your good spirit before everything else.

Now it is obvious why our guest of honor at Founders' Day is a leading figure in the Lebanese economic and financial sphere, former minister of Finance Mrs. Raya Haffar Al-Hasan whose solid preparation, hard work and composure bring her here to celebrate with us and share with us what would make this event even more meaningful.

HAPPY FOUNDERS' DAY to all, and a warm welcome to Mrs. Raya Al-Hasan.

Paul Haidostian
President