

*Haigazian University*

*51<sup>st</sup> Commencement Exercises*

*July 1, 2011*

**President's Word**

Of all the messages we can give to our students on campus through our curriculum and extra-curricular strategies, there is one that I feel urged to repeat today.

It is about a BALANCED LIFE.

What makes the world go round is balance. What makes a person maintain livelihood is balance. What makes sense for budgets is balance. What gives health to the body is a balanced diet. What leads one's spirit to inner peace is balance. What stabilizes relationships is balance. What unites the heavens and the earth is balance. What make a person whole is the body, mind, soul balance.

Balance in life may be the most important, but it is often the least dramatic and the least attractive.

Radical and one-sided perspectives are attractive. Balanced ones may go unnoticed.

Haigazian University has directly and indirectly taught that balance is a value we should cherish. I am restating it today. It is a critical need of life for good judgment and good quality, and it gives both a deep and a wide perspective in life. Balance is what opens your eyes. Imbalance and radicalism show you some. Balance shows you much.

Balance does not mean neutrality in everything. Where there is suffering, neglect, corruption, injustice, or superficiality, you cannot be neutral, for as it is said “you cannot be neutral on a moving train” and you cannot be neutral where there is pain. Neutrality is only one part of a balanced life.

Most importantly, balance in the mind requires both simple focus as well as critical thinking. But let me remind you that just as simple focus does not mean immaturity, similarly critical thinking includes self-critical thinking as well. Balance in ones views requires a standpoint, but a standpoint is not only a point. It is a point which helps you stand: today, alone, with others, and tomorrow, in all circumstances.

Guest Speaker:

To help us reflect deeper and celebrate our special day, with us is a distinguished guest, an international banker with 30 years of experience, a philanthropist, a live exemplar of the Lebanese human capital in the diaspora.

Mr. Michel Goguikian was born in Beirut, where he lived until the age of 12 when his late father, Jean Goguikian, was named Ambassador of Lebanon to the Andean Countries, based in Bogota, Colombia. Mr. Goguikian is the holder of an MS in International Business. He has attended finance and management programs for senior executives at the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School, and at the Harvard Business School.

After 10 years at Citibank, in 1991 Mr. Goguikian joined the Spanish bank Banco Santander, currently Continental Europe’s largest bank. After opening

the South American markets for the bank's Investment Banking operations he rose in the ranks to his current position of Special Advisor to the Chairman and to the Executive Committee of Santander, and was recently named President of its Colombian subsidiary. Prior to this, Mr. Goguikian was the Chairman and CEO of Banco de Venezuela. He is currently the Vice Chairman of the Venezuela Banking Council Board, and a member of the Board of the Venezuelan American Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Goguikian philanthropic activities began over 10 years ago first in Venezuela then abroad. In 2001 he helped establish Universia Venezuela, which he currently chairs, to promote closer cooperation between Venezuela's 49 universities, their faculty and their students, and to break traditional barriers between academia and the corporate world. In 2005 he created *Bancrecer* a leading microfinance institution that has given in excess of 50,000 microloans to the very poor. He has also been part of a number of philanthropic initiatives in the US and in Armenia. In 2008 he established The Goguikian Foundation in Lebanon in honor of his late father, Ambassador Jean M. Goguikian (whose dear widow is also with us here), to support the Lebanese-Armenian community, through higher education, and to ultimately contribute to the social and economic development of the Lebanese society as a whole.

Mr. Goguikian, father of three boys aged 19, 17 and 14, resides in Caracas, Venezuela.

Mr. Goguikian, our graduating class and we all are eager to hear and learn from your experience. Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Michel Goguikian.

*Rev. Paul Haidostian, Ph.D.*

*President*