

Founders' Day 2022
Haigazian University
Monday, October 17, 2022
12 Noon

President's Word

There are many reasons why mission-oriented educational institutions and universities are established by the ones we call founders. Founders want to contribute to a good future for the next generations. Here already is a major lesson. I would not call them founders if what they are building is for themselves and for their times.

The founding Armenian Evangelical Church here was hoping for a qualified and well-prepared new generation of teachers and leaders, call them servants of society. The donor individuals in the USA who joined the project had seen their dream cut short by the Genocide back in Hadjin. Following massacres at Adana in 1909, and out of Phoenix, Arizona, to Philadelphia to New York, they made their dream a reality in Beirut through the Armenian Missionary Association of America in 1955.

Every well-balanced individual hopes for a good future, but it is special people who also plan for a good future for the ones to be born tomorrow.

Society knows that the future depends on the refinement of the character of the next generation, not only on its formal educational levels, transitory accomplishments and socioeconomic welfare.

What we at Haigazian University continue to hope and work for is the good future of our students today and tomorrow. When we say students, we mean every student in every major. Skilled teachers will be trained somehow, somewhere, but we hope to have teachers with passion for sharing. Degree holding accountants will be trained somehow, somewhere, but we hope to cultivate trustworthy accountants. Astute political scientists will be shaped somehow, somewhere, but we hope to see them value accountability and fairness. You complete the list.

Whether it is Lebanon, Armenia or other countries and communities in the world, degrees and certifications will be obtained and people move the world forward in some direction, but for the Haigazian type of mission, a university has to also have character, and it has to build character.

Let us then remember: Universities exist because we know

- The mind can be enlightened.
- The heart should find its Lord.
- Learning can become a habit.
- Multigenerational knowledge can and should be shared.
- Skills need to be sharpened.
- The ear should be as trained as the other senses.
- The world is larger than my needs and context.
- Communities of learning can elevate the standards of life.

Have we succeeded in the past 67 years? Are we succeeding now?

What matters is that on every Founders Day, we renew our commitment for a type of excellence that supersedes narrow academic endeavors. A good future is also determined by resourceful people who use what they have in store for the sake of others, not simply for their personal comfort, success and prestige.

As we start the 68th year of Haigazian University in this valuable part of Beirut, we have decided to honor one such person of ample resourcefulness named Dr. Arda Ekmekji, who is also the speaker of this day, and a person whose has exemplified our value system in generous ways. About her in a short while following.

So, more on being resourceful: it is how richly one's self is shaped, how elevating one's presence is, it is how deeply one thinks, how hard one is on oneself, how responsibly one speaks, how one maintains the standards, how one shares with colleagues and even strangers, and then, only after that who one knows in society.

Dr. Ekmekji, with whom I have personally worked for at least twenty years, I will call such a resourceful person, professor and dean we are honoring today.

Natural resources are full in our world. What we need is resourceful people who turn all natural and spiritual, cognitive and personal capital in the service of life, the life of others, otherwise resources lose meaning and are wasted.

Happy Founders Day Haigazian.

Paul Haidostian
President