

Haigazian University
70th Anniversary Gala Banquet
Phoenicia Hotel
May 28, 2025

President's Word

As we approached the celebration of Haigazian University's 70th anniversary, we set out to come up with a motto that would summarize our journey, our values, and our future. The Committee brainstormed, the Board reflected, and together we weighed many meaningful words. In the end, three stood out:

Inspiring. Visionary. Leadership.

Three distinct words — yet bound by a singular, enduring mission.

Inspiring

In an age marked by apathy, indifference, and detachment, we strive to rekindle the spirit. Since 1955, there have been many instances when the spirit has been put to test and even crushed. To *inspire* at a university is no small task — it demands committed work by faculty, staff, and administration. It means guiding students to become service-oriented, to rise beyond themselves, and to grow in heart, mind, and purpose. The clearest fruit of this spirit is visible in our dynamic student clubs and initiatives.

Visionary

At Haigazian, we honor our past and engage fully with the present. Yet, to be *visionary* means helping our students see beyond both — to imagine a future not yet visible. In a region like the Middle East, this is no easy task. It's like driving through the fog of the Qadisha Valley with only five meters of visibility, and still knowing how to find your way. Vision requires faith, courage, an inner compass, and the willingness to be led by God's guidance.

Leadership

Leadership is not a title; it is a mission. It involves clarity, responsibility, and care ...for people, for truth, for creation. At Haigazian, we aim to cultivate leaders who embody high moral standards, humility, and purpose-driven professionalism.

Seventy years ago, the Haigazian vision was born of people in the United States and Lebanon who turned necessity into opportunity. It was not a commercial venture. It was a leap of faith — by individuals like Revs. Aharonian and Kalfayan, and by families like the Philibosians and Mehagians, who were moved by a selfless desire to serve future generations. This was the vision of the Armenian Evangelical community, supported by the Armenian Missionary Association of America.

And this leadership — the kind that empowers others — continues to shape generations.

As I was considering adding an illustration here, I recalled an older man who used to sell fruit—mainly bananas—from a heavy, worn-out cart in the Wardieh area, not far from Haigazian. It must have been about twenty-five years ago. During one of our daily walks, we stopped to buy some fruit and struck up a conversation with him about the physically demanding nature of his work. I learned then that by pushing his cart for long hours each day, he had managed to send his three children to college, providing them with the best education he could afford. To me, he became a symbol of inspiration—like a living, breathing scholarship fund. He was a leader in his own right, guided by sacrifice and a clear, purpose-driven vision.

Conclusion

Our history is in your booklets tonight. But if one word could capture our 70 years, it might well be **scholarships**. That is the heartbeat of our mission — and the central purpose of tonight's celebration.

Let us not forget: *Inspiring Visionary Leadership* becomes empty branding if we fail to sustain our students through scholarship support. As I often remind people, scholarships are not discounts, but one party's heart turned into investments into young lives.

Higher education demands high hopes. In an era marked by regional instability, migration, cognitive revolutions, and uncertainty among youth, we pray for the strength and wisdom to rise to the challenge.

So tonight, I thank you. Thank you for your presence, for your generosity, and for honoring the legacy of Haigazian — a university that has stood firm for seven decades and, with God's guidance and your support, will continue to thrive.

I also extend deep gratitude to our dignitaries, friends, and the devoted members of our Organizing Committee — whose care, dedication, and attention to every detail have made this evening possible.

May your support strengthen our scholarship fund and allow us to confidently continue our mission — investing not only in education, but in the soul of a people and a region.

Thank you.

Paul Haidostian

President