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## CEE Chairman's Message



I am delighted to be writing these words in the first issue of the newsletter that is being initiated by the Civil Engineering Society (CES) at the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, in collaboration with the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department. Through

this newsletter, we hope to establish a new link between our vibrant student body, distinguished faculty members, successful alumni, and dedicated staff to share news about our collective activities, achievements, and plans.

This first issue is coming at an interesting time for the department, and during an academic year which promises to be exceptional. To start with, two PhD programs in Civil Engineering as well as Environmental and Water Resources Engineering were recently launched, and the department welcomed its first four PhD candidates during the fall semester. With this new development, the department, the FEA, and AUB affirm their commitment to world-class research, and to training individuals who will assume academic and professional leadership roles in various fields related to civil and environmental engineering.

This academic year witnessed the largest ever incoming first year class in civil engineering (125 students) bringing the number of undergraduate students in the department to 350, up from 210 just three years ago. Driven by the market demand for civil engineers, and coupled with an increase in admission scores, the bigger and stronger student body has the potential to enrich the department, but has also presented us with challenges related to class size and teaching resources. With the support of the FEA administration, new faculty members are being recruited to address the increased teaching load, including Dr. Shadi Najjar who joined us last September.

An event that is highlighted elsewhere in this issue is the selection of Prof. George Ayoub to be the first recipient of the Outstanding Professor Award in FEA. This recognition of a great faculty member is a source of pride for every student who was taught by Prof. Ayoub, including myself and most of the CEE faculty members.

I look forward to sharing with you news regarding other department initiatives in the coming issues. Till then, I wish you a most fruitful time.

Isam Kaysi

## Professor George Ayoub: First Recipient of the Outstanding FEA Professor Award

Narine Bolghourjian



The Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) family in AUB is proud to announce that its long-standing member Prof. George Ayoub will be the first recipient of the newly established Outstanding FEA Professor Award. This award was initiated by the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (FEA) in an effort to recognize and honor professors who have spent most of their academic careers as active

members contributing to the excellence of the faculty.

This award, which requires that the candidates be internationally recognized and committed academicians having outstanding records both within and outside the FEA, is granted only if there is a commendable recipient in the faculty. The decision of granting it is taken by a special committee formed by the Dean of FEA and includes prominent individuals in the profession with at least one being from outside AUB but familiar with the nominee's accomplishments.

Commenting on the award that will be granted to him during an upcoming ceremony, Prof. Ayoub said that he considers it "a prestigious award that opens the way for recognizing professors who have spent their lives serving the FEA, just as other awards serve to recognize the FEA graduates who have left their fingerprints in the field of engineering".

This award is a brand new ring added to the already existing chain of accomplishments and prizes received by Prof. Ayoub, one of the pillars of the CEE Department and AUB, who was also the recipient of the university's Distinguished Faculty Service Award in 2005 in recognition of his sustained high quality service to AUB. This does not come as a surprise though, because since graduating from AUB in 1956, Prof. Ayoub has committed himself to this institution, making the CEE department his first home instead of his second as his wife says.

When asked to comment on his teaching career, Prof. Ayoub said that he loves teaching and considers his students as his children. In fact, the whole department regards Prof. Ayoub as a father and is thus proud to have him receive this prestigious award hoping that other CEE members would follow his footsteps and attain such esteemed positions in the future as well. ❖

## ❖ CES Mission and Cabinet Elections

Ramsey Nasr

The essence of the CES mission is to provide civil engineering students with a framework that unites them within a socio/academic context and that fosters their involvement in student life in general. In order to accomplish this, the CES organizes regular yearly activities, which aim to give students a feel for the practical implementation of theories learned in class, as well as giving them a chance to interact and get to know each other as individuals rather than simply as classmates.

At the academic level, the CES organizes various activities ranging from summer camps to organizing workshops, software training labs, and seminars, in addition to setting up student competitions. On the lighter side of things, the society has managed to regularly organize up to four yearly dinners, as well as numerous gatherings. The addition of a number of regular annual activities is being currently considered as the CES membership has steadily increased over the past few years.

This year's CES cabinet election was held on Tuesday, the 13th of November, 2007 and was characterized by an unprecedented number of registered students, as well as a record voter turnout on Election Day. The CES member count for this year stands at 300, up 100 from last year. Voter turnout reached 95% of the 300 eligible voters with 19 candidates competing for eight seats. The number of candidates this year is also a new record. The atmosphere was highly competitive and a large part of the results went down to the wire! The 8 seats, up from 5 seats last year, were



CES Cabinet Of 2007 - 2008

distributed equally across students from all four years [two from each year] and went to Nadim Azar [President, 4th year], Ali Balhas [Vice President, 2nd year], Roula Rbeiz [Secretary, 4th year], Mai Khattab [Treasurer, 1st year], Catherine Shadarevian [Record Keeper, 1st year], Omar About Kar [Photographer, 3rd year], Mrius Chaghoury [Member at Large, 3rd year], and Georges El Nacheff [Member at Large, 2nd year]. ❖

## ❖ CES Christmas Karaoke Dinner

Roula Rbeiz



CEE students enjoying their time



The annual Christmas Karaoke Dinner has become one of the traditional social events organized by the CES during the past few years. This event, aside from other CES social activities, helps increase the bond between students especially those from different years, since it is a chance to gather, chill out, and feel the festive spirit in a cozy atmosphere away from the stressing academic environment. This year, around 70 Civil and Environmental Engineering students attended the event, which was held on the 19th of December, 2007 at the El Fornayo Italian Bistro in the five-star Safir Heliopolitan Hotel. During the event, students sang at the karaoke rhythms, enjoyed good food, and one of them was lucky enough to win a mobile phone offered by the Multimedia 460 Store. ❖

## ❖ The CEE Department Launches Two PhD Degrees

Roula Rbeiz

The American University of Beirut, one of the leading universities in the Middle East, first introduced PhD programs in 1961, but the Civil War unfortunately led to the suspension of these programs due to the resulting unfavorable situation in the country.

This year AUB launched eight different PhD programs, two of them offered by the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department [CEE]. Interestingly, the initiation of these programs in Civil Engineering [CE with concentrations in Structural and Materials Engineering, Geotechnical Engineering and Transportation systems] and in Environmental and Water Resources Engineering [EWRE], has been coupled with a five-year Campus Master Plan of renovating old buildings and constructing new facilities in order to keep up with the university's evolving academic mission. Within this framework, the CCC Scientific Research Building encompassing high-tech laboratories has been built, several classrooms have been upgraded, and plans for the new engineering laboratory complex – Irany-Oxy Engineering Complex- have been finalized and their implementation is expected to start by Summer 2008. These ongoing changes and future commitment will contribute to PhD programs and allow them meet their objective of providing students with the theory, methodology, and the proper expertise necessary to address modern engineering challenges and assume leading academic and

professional roles in their fields of study.

Currently, four students are already pursuing PhD degrees in CEE. Amer El Souri, Elie Awwad, Lilian Malaeb, and Hani El-Naghi are all keen to go through this experience and provide the CEE with its first batch of PhD graduates. For instance, Amer who is a PhD candidate in Structural and Materials Engineering, having a particular interest in structural dynamics, hopes that his study will help improve the structural earthquake design and construction practices in the region. Lilian, who is pursuing a degree in EWRE, considers her field as an ever-growing and extremely crucial one, which provides plenty of research opportunities.

When asked about the impact of the department's initiative to launch PhD programs, Amer said that learning about it was a delight, since AUB has graduated most of the leading engineers in Lebanon for the past few decades, while Lilian stressed that she strongly believes in AUB, its mission, and its ability to be a pioneer in research. Similarly, Elie welcomed the department's initiative and said, "Having the chance to acquire quality education in AUB will eliminate the need to travel and seek it in foreign institutions".

With the onset of the two PhD programs, we as a student body feel proud and look forward to take part ourselves in the department's mission of excellence. ❖

## ❖ Two CEE Students Receive the New Franklin Scholarship Award

Mayssa Dabaghi and Lori Slikhanian



Ragheb Al-Halabi (left) & Charbel Moubarak (right)

Second and third year Civil and Environmental Engineering students Charbel Moubarak and Ragheb Al-Halabi were among the 20 AUB students who received the new Franklin Scholarship for the academic year 2007-08. This newly established need and merit based scholarship, named after the American scien-

tist and diplomat, Benjamin Franklin, was initiated by AUB with funding from the United States Agency for International Development [USAID].

The two students were informed of their receipt of the scholarship by the Financial Aid office. Their names and those of the other outstanding students were announced by President John Waterbury in the presence of the US Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman in a pleasant ceremony in West Hall on Tuesday the 30th of October, 2007.

This scholarship, which is awarded to students having applied for financial aid and who have an excellent academic record in AUB, will cover all their tuition fees during their entire study period at AUB, provided they maintain a minimum GPA of 85. When asked about his impressions, Charbel said that it is a "very good initiative that supports students

who have the intellectual potential, but do not have the financial capacity", while Ragheb was amazed because he was previously unaware that there was an award given to AUB students based on both their academic performance and their need. As for the responsibilities that may have come along with the award, Charbel said, "it puts some pressure since you have to maintain your level, but then again, it is a positive pressure because it pushes you to do even better" and Ragheb agreed saying, "I am pressured yet I am also motivated to work even harder".

We all wish that Charbel and Ragheb maintain their scholarships until they graduate and hope that more Civil and Environmental Engineering students receive such valuable awards and scholarships throughout the coming years. ❖

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## ❖ Civil Summer Camps Gain More and More Interest

Narine Bolghourjian

Over the past two years, the Civil Engineering Society [CES] has organized two Civil Volunteering Summer Camps for interested Civil and Environmental Engineering [CEE] students within the faculty of Engineering and Architecture [FEA]. The camps have aimed at helping students gain practical experience while doing community service and spending memorable time with their classmates and professors. The camps, funded by the Economic and Social Fund for Development [ESFD] at the Council for Development and Reconstruction [CDR] and later by the Task



Force for Reconstruction and Community Service [TFRCS] at AUB, gave the students a chance to become active community members striving for the progress of society. The 2006 Civil Volunteering Summer Camp was held in the Akkar area. Over the week extending from June 17 to June 25, fifteen students and two faculty members were hosted by the Municipality of Mishmish and were given the chance to take part in the construction works of a healthcare and agricultural development center in the village. The participants also helped local scout groups clean the forest and assisted local students in preparing for their official Brevet exams. In short, the 2006 venture was a modest accomplishment, but it was a stepping stone

towards a more organized camp in 2007.

The idea of the second Civil Volunteering Summer Camp was initiated in May 2007. However, the camp was “indefinitely” postponed due to the prevailing political situation in the country at the time. Later, with the support of the ESFD, CEE, FEA, and TFRCS, the CES cabinet scheduled the camp to take place between August 25 and September 1. The interesting development regarding this second camp was the fact that 40 students were involved and were divided into two groups, working in the villages of Tyri and Rcheif in the Caza of Bint Jbeil and in the village of Zebqine in the Caza of Sour, where the need for reconstruction was pressing due to the heavy damage inflicted by the July 2006 war.

The second camp was more organized in terms of training sessions, safety seminars and volunteering workshops. Moreover, the work accomplished was more involved, for it comprised of construction and rehabilitation works, surveying of houses, and assessment of roads and infrastructure. The participants also had the chance to team up with the “Beit-bil-Jnub” initiative at AUB, which works in collaboration with the UN-Habitat. Finally, drawings and reports were presented to the municipalities to serve for documentation and evaluation purposes.

As a conclusion, it is clear that these camps were not only practical experiences for the participants, but also motivational factors for the villagers themselves. Thus, encouraged by this positive outcome, the CES along with the CEE department will keep on organizing more community related activities hoping that the contribution of the students will continue to increase with every new event. ❖

## ❖ CEE Alumnus Letter A Bridge to the Fulfillment of Your Dreams



Gustave Alain Cordahi

AUB,  
CEE Class of 2007,  
Transportation  
Engineering Graduate  
Student,  
University of California at  
Berkeley

Getting into CEE is so much more than simply the first step towards building a sustainable future career. The CEE experience is in no way a simple aggregation of years that leads to a deterministic result, that is...your BE degree.

The world of CEE is the beginning of a journey through life. This journey can lead you in an infinity of directions. However, no matter the path, the final destination of CEE alumni is usually a shiny pearl, a distinguished jewel in the world of success.

Looking back at my years as a student at AUB, all that is drawn on my memory pages is yet another affirmation of my pride as a graduate of this department. I was lucky to experience the department with three different chairmen. Passing on the responsibility from a serving chair to his successor was smooth, in clear contradiction with similar processes at the national level. It is remarkable how, the overheated political environment and the real constraints of the explosive external situation, were always matched by an internal determination to work and progress. The AUB CEE department is a reservoir of constructive forces which

will certainly contribute to the rise of Lebanon.

The secret behind the success of CEE also lies in the family atmosphere that binds the various constituents of the department. In that respect, the CES contributes in strengthening the bonds in a department where daily interactions turn into life lessons...

This first newsletter is another revelation of the importance that the department gives to its members. To me, representing the CEE department is a matter of pride. Winning the Distinguished Graduate and the Penrose Awards showed me that my efforts did not go unnoticed and were recognized by the department and faculty. That's the CEE journey: living, learning and breaking through into the world and the future.

Today, as one of those alumni who engrave the CEE brand in golden letters internationally, I am writing to declare once again my commitment to my dear department: wherever in time and place you are part of that CEE family, always remember that many people like you had the AUB CEE world as a bridge towards the fulfillment of their dreams... ❖