

# What made AUB the region's "most civically engaged campus"?

12/11/2015

Safa Jafari Safa | Office of Communications | [media@aub.edu.lb](mailto:media@aub.edu.lb) |



AUB, represented by the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS), has been ranked as the “most civically engaged campus” in the Middle East and North Africa in a first regional annual competition held by the Ma’an Arab University Alliance.

The university was praised for the scale and the impact of its initiatives engendering transformative experiences for everyone involved.

The Ma’an Alliance for Arab Universities is a regional platform that is an affiliate of the international Talloires Network (an active alliance of 304 universities) and based at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Founded in 2008, it connects university leaders, faculty, and students around a common vision of increased civic responsibility on Arab university campuses and graduating civically engaged youth capable of building the societies they aspire to live in.

In the regional civic engagement competition, universities from Qatar, Morocco, Palestine, and Egypt competed as finalists along with AUB. Qatar University was first runner up while AUB won first rank “for its high-impact and innovative approach to an organically-linked, multidisciplinary, and cross-faculty process for bringing change to underserved communities,” as stated by the jurors.

Competing universities were asked to fill out application forms that summed up the number and type of civic engagement initiatives on each university campus; level of student and faculty involvement; reach to community; students involvement; partnerships; and use of innovative, creative, and sustainable solutions to tackle challenges. In their presentation of multidisciplinary initiatives for the competition, the AUB delegates presented CCECS’ methodological and

operational framework on current projects which tackle the pressing issues and challenges affecting Lebanon. By the competition selection criteria covering initiatives target groups, sustainability, university support, civic engagement, creativity and social innovation, and presentation, AUB scored the highest.

CCECS emphasizes the significance of building sustainable strategic partnerships with stakeholders and communities in order to integrate theory and practice. "In addition to the remarkable key performance indicators that CCECS presented, our competitive edge was based on the essence of our projects and initiatives that illustrated how AUB-CCES is pushing the boundaries of civic engagement to address and tackle the core and complex challenges that are facing out respective communities," said Rabih Shibli, Director of the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service at AUB.

Approximately 2000 AUB students were involved in civic engagement initiatives organized by CCECS during the 2014-2015 academic year. Twenty-seven faculty members directly engage in service-learning courses and community projects that the Center is leading and coordinating in partnership with about 200 organizations. In its application, CCECS listed the following cross-cutting tenets as defining their operations: Outreach and volunteerism; capacity building; community development projects; service-learning; advocacy campaigns; civic engagement camps; and the Syria relief project. The center works with other civically engaged institutes on AUB campus: The AUB Nature Conservation Center, which recruits volunteers from CCECS, and the AUB Neighborhood initiative, which has partnered with CCECS on 3 main projects, "Poetry on the Walls", the "Jeanne d'Arc Project", and a project for greening the neighborhood.

Juror Amani Elshimi, Director of Undergraduate Research at the American University in Cairo, told us that AUB-CCES presented an exemplary model of engaging a whole campus in coordinated efforts to serve and learn from the community.

"AUB distinguished itself in the Ma'an Engaged Campus Competition by demonstrating a community-based project that had immediate, tangible impact on a large scale," she said. "The choice of target group was socially responsible and sincere.

Elshimi also praised the way departments both on and off campus coordinated their efforts to avoid duplication and waste resources.

"The change achieved in the community, in terms of sanitation, education, housing, and well-being, was stunning. The sheer scale of positive impact is worthy of recognition - impact on the refugees, the students, and the faculty and administration involved. It was clearly a transformative experience for all. We thank AUB for documenting it so carefully, and sharing the learning experience with other institutions. AUB, no doubt, deserves the award."