Your Excellency Trustee Saad Hariri and the Hariri family
Your Excellencies ministers and members of parliament
Chairman of the BOT Dr. Thomas Morris and members of the BOT
President Peter Dorman
Esteemed guests and colleagues

Today marks a memorable event in the history of the School of Nursing (SON) at AUB; the inauguration of the Rafic Hariri School of Nursing.

The School of Nursing at AUB has a long and distinguished history; it was founded in 1905 as the first School of Nursing in Lebanon and the ME. Dale Home became its designated building then and it continued thereafter for many years to come. The building included living quarters for nursing students, classrooms, and offices and was described as “a comfortable place with a family atmosphere that cannot be found anywhere else.” In those days and despite the difficulties in convincing local women to enroll, the school attracted Syrians, Armenians, Palestinians, Egyptians, Iraqis, Iranians, Cypriots, Greeks, Bulgarians, Russians, Polish, British and Americans”. This pioneering period was an indication of the growing reputation of the school and of the interest in nursing education.

During the first 100 years of the history of the School of Nursing, there have been—unfortunately—many war years. It was the Lebanese civil war, however, that had the greatest impact on the school. Despite the difficulties of these years, the School of Nursing continued to function and have an impact on nursing developments in the country and abroad. AUB faculty and graduates made important contributions to the profession at all levels and they continue to do so until today. Because students from the region were not able to come to Lebanon to study nursing, a number of countries decided to set up their own programs. AUB nursing faculty
traveled to the region to provide critical advice and support for a number of these initiatives; and we continue to do that until this very day.

More recently in 2004, the school launched two new programs in addition to the BSN program: a revitalized BT-BSN bridging program and the Master of Science in Nursing which currently has four tracks, nursing administration, adult care, Psychiatry and Mental Health, and Community Nursing.

In 2005 the SON celebrated its centennial with public lectures, seminars, and workshops as well as an international scientific conference. The SON at AUB is one of the very few SON in the world that continued to offer academic programs for that period of time without interruptions.

In 2007, AUB SON was granted unconditional accreditation by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education in the USA as well as membership in the prestigious American Association of Colleges of Nursing thus becoming the first SON outside the US territories to be accredited by CCNE and to become a member of AACN.

In 2007-2008, the collaborative efforts between the Hariri Foundation and the SON resulted in a number of initiatives. A post-basic one year course in community nursing was developed and successfully completed by 20 nurses working in the Hariri Community Centers in Lebanon. The Hariri Foundation supported as well the residencies of 9 Masters of Science students who spent 6 weeks of training in their advanced field of specialization at Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and Hospitals. Testimonies from the students, which were sent to Mrs. Nazek Hariri, attest to the importance of this experience in developing their nursing careers and in improving the care they provide to patients in Lebanon.

In 2009, a collaborative PhD project for capacity building in nursing between Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and AUB SON has been prepared and is currently under discussion. This unique PhD program which aims to prepare the future nurse scientists and clinicians for the country and the region will be offered partly at AUB and partly at Hopkins; the degree will be granted by Hopkins the first 5 years. The PhD dissertation research will address health problems of relevance to Lebanon.
Ladies and Gentleman, the Mission of the School of Nursing has always been to promote and maintain the highest educational standards of excellence, integrity, and professionalism, by preparing high quality nurses for which there is a strong demand in Schools and Colleges of Nursing, hospitals, and health services in Lebanon and abroad. It is not surprising as a result that the name of Rafic Hariri will be for long linked to the SON at AUB. If there is anything that defines Mr. Hariri and points to his proudest achievement, it is the importance that he gave to education and future generations. Supporting the education of more than 33,000 Lebanese students in the best universities in Lebanon, the U.S., the U.K, France, and Canada is a testimony of his wisdom and vision. His mission, as many people know it, was to make education a means for the development of the youth in Lebanon. His legacy will extend now to educating the future generations of nurses at AUB.

The Rafic Hariri School of Nursing will be the new and long-awaited home for the SON at AUB. The building is not fully furnished yet; it will house faculty offices, an auditorium, classrooms, computer lab, state of the art skills and simulation labs which will offer students real-life clinical interactions using advanced technology before working with patients, a center for nursing research which will be headed by the Rafic Hariri endowed chair, continuing nursing education, as well as student facilities. The building will be shared with colleagues from nursing services at AUBMC.

Rafic Hariri believed in educating the new generations to serve Lebanon; a vision certainly shared by the SON whose main goal is to educate the future generations of professional nurses to serve this great country and with it the nursing profession at large. The Rafic Hariri endowment fund for student scholarships will help make this vision possible.

We at the SON consider ourselves privileged to be a part of this historic development.

Huda Huijer
February 19, 2009