

**US Embassy Visit to NDU**  
April 30, 2008

Your Excellency the U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Michele J. Sison

It is an honor having you with us at the Notre Dame University.

Notre Dame University has had a proud tradition of serving comprehensive culture and values that we share with counterpart American universities.

In light of our convictions of the lead of American standards of education, we have been providing quality academic programs and services to citizens and members of the Lebanese communities and the larger communities in the MENA area.

The university started planning the delivery of the diversity of these services in 1987, inspired perhaps by what is probably the most famous about American Education, that is, Liberal Arts approach with all what this concept means.

Over the years, no other Lebanese university has been prepared to do as much or go as far in their curricula, services and activities.

NDU has provided innovative, flexible, quality educational options to students during crisis situations in Lebanon, and when Lebanese were stranded from being able to continue their university education in the USA.

I would like to commend the outstanding faculty who during crisis situations devoted their professional lives to making the Notre Dame University a place of excellence and achievement. It has required a large measure of commitment and dedication, and often, real courage.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all Administrators, Faculty Members, Students and staff to thank you for providing us with your valuable time to listen to them and see for yourself the freedom they enjoy and the value oriented western trend that we all have sat course for.

We live in an age of unparalleled technological progress; however freedom and prosperity are still hardly sought in the disturbed Developing Societies. Americans have put women and men into space, learned how to transplant hearts and to condense a library full of books onto one tiny chip. In Europe, people survived the imposition of totalitarianism behind the Iron Curtain and then launched

one of the most important and peaceful revolutions in history by tearing down the Berlin Wall and restoring democracy to all of Europe. But here in Lebanon and the region at large we live at a time of unprecedented danger and instability. Changes, both good and bad, are occurring at an ever-faster pace. We live in a brand new world, with new versions of political upheaval, global pandemic, world political cleavages and religious polarization.

How can we cope with the local, regional, global tests of our times? It is through collaborations and especially institutionalized cooperation, your Embassy as an institution and our University as an institution. I think we should have the foresight and wisdom to create a web of activities among our institutions and that could help in rescuing us from the ashes of the different wars that we have witnessed in Lebanon and the region.

At every level, we're seeing a substantial upswing in governmental visits and consultations, evidence that the Lebanese-American relationship is moving forward.

We need to keep working together as institutions to bring about an academic solution to Lebanon's dangerous pursuit of acute political polarization.

We reason, as Americans have believed all through that nations are effective on the world stage in direct proportion to the talents, wisdom and experience of their leaders -- and their citizens. This is where our role comes in.

We as Lebanese need the skills, the values and the experiences that you could provide for us. We assign to our students Text books and literature produced by Americans and we teach them the obligation to search for the truth how to inquire, how to assess and analyze. It is through academic American books and literature our students are learning the value of reasoned debate and the role of doubt in reaching a judgment. We are teaching our students the responsibility to seek out those who do not think like they do.

Gone are the days when we were raised simply to execute the ideas of others. Now we must be active participants in managing continuous change. If I may say this. I hope that your presence today with us could furnish concrete steps towards a more institutionalized cooperation between our institution and the American Embassy.

Again, I welcome you in your University and please consider it as such because after all academically we are an American University.