

Despite all odds, let us keep faith in our future!

The Rector's Message to the 2021-2022 Student Community



This message is typically addressed to new students at USJ, particularly first-year students. However, after two years of campus closure, **we are all first-year students** in the sense that we must all rediscover life on our campuses. Let us hope that the vaccination campaign initiated by USJ at Hôtel-Dieu de France Hospital in recent months will allow all of us to resume an in-person presence in class (actually partially in-person) and a social life among the different members of our educational community.

Faith! The word we must keep in mind for the days to come. It is the only asset that we, as Lebanese, must always protect and rely on in the face of recurring crises. Above all, have faith in yourselves, in your intellectual and psychological abilities, but also in your University and academic institution, in your teachers and your leaders, who will do whatever it takes to ensure that the academic year runs smoothly. The antidote to hell is faith in one another and in oneself. In the midst of all hardships brought on by crises, our faith is a valuable asset for our present and future, for our ability to remain steadfast, for our resistance and resilience.

The 2021–22 academic year will be split between in-person and remote learning. It is obvious that internships, laboratory experiments, and practical work all necessitate students' presence either at their institution or on the ground. To accommodate the unpredictability caused by a puzzling pandemic and a challenging economic environment, all live courses and lectures will be recorded or posted on Teams, Zoom or Moodle platforms. As a result, you can use them asynchronously if you are unable to follow in a synchronous mode. Our goal in all forms of teaching is to ensure that your diploma is of the highest quality, serving as a passport to your professional life and personal fulfillment.

It is known that “*Saint-Joseph University does not accept to be at the exclusive service of a social class or an ethnic community*” and “*it does not accept either to be subjugated by an ideology and intends to safeguard on its campus freedom of information and dialogue as long as this does not harm public order and teaching activities*” (USJ Charter – Article 6). **These words reflect the social and humanistic mission of USJ: the freedom of personal belief of each member of the University** is essential. As such, all of its members are called upon to act as good citizens, respecting each other's rights and duties without oppression, and making living together in the university space a real duty for all. Pluralism values are an asset to everyone in a French-speaking context.

It is also known that Saint-Joseph University of Beirut is a Jesuit university, commonly known as *al yésou3iyyi*. Since 1875, it has consistently played a pioneering role in Lebanese and regional higher education. Always highly ranked in international rankings, it is part of the international group of 200 Jesuit universities worldwide, ascribing to **our educational approach the care provided for each student (*cura personalis*)**, encouraging students to strive for excellence in their intellectual and moral abilities (**the magis**), and focusing on the well-educated mind that understands the meaning of the knowledge it receives. In 2021–22, the Jesuits will commemorate the 500th anniversary of their founder Ignatius of Loyola's conversion, an opportunity to reflect on his life as a project of love and freedom in the service of others.

Last but not least, my advice to all of our students in the coming year is **to be strategic students who know how to invest their time at the University**, who organize their time based on the need to succeed, and who are eager to be part of a proactive work team. The activities organized by the Department of Student Life through clubs, student chapters, the Chaplaincy, the Department of Sports, and many other bodies, are as important as your academic path. During your university years, you will gain autonomy, which will give you a taste of freedom, as well as a well-established personality in terms of knowledge and know-how!

Let us walk the paths of knowledge together, with hope and faith!