

Going BEYOND Awards

FEMALE ACADEMIC ROLE MODEL EMPOWERMENT, EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY (FREE) PROJECT

Female Academic Role Model Empowerment, Equality and Sustainability (FREE) project was established to inspire female academics across continents in HE institutions (HEI), including three countries in the Mediterranean region: Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.



FREE adopts a problem-based approach, and focuses on academics, students, administrative, functional, mid and senior level managers, and executives at HEIs.

The objectives can be summed up as improving the management and operation of HE by introducing equality and sustainability centers, and developing knowledge-creation through its research networks.

AUB's partners on the project are:

- Universidad Nacional De Educación A Distancia, UNED
- Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, VGTU
- Universidad De Alicante, UA
- Universidad De Oldenburg, UOL
- Arab International University, AIU
- Damascus University, DU
- Lebanese University, LU
- Modern University Of Beirut, MUBS
- University Of Petra, UOP
- Princess Sumaya University For Technology, PSUT



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After a thorough analysis of the region, a series of training workshops were designed to help the academic community recognize, identify, and tackle certain specific difficulties encountered by women within HEIs, as well as encourage the creation of specific gender studies and networks with similar interests and objectives to the FREE project.

The workshops created and delivered are:

- Female Empowerment in Higher Education
- Sustainability in Higher Education
- Gender Equality
- Soft Skills
- Digital Skills

AUB participated in creating the soft skills course namely topics related to leadership, public speaking, and time management. 148 participants registered for the courses of whom 66 were students.



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PROGRAM IMPACT AND SUCCESS

The immediate effect can be seen when capacity increases the visibility of female academics and professionals on campus, including technical, digital, interpersonal, and executive leadership skills.

This also increases the organizational power of female academics and professionals, with the ability to apply soft and hard influence tactics in the workplace without total dependence on authority or positional power, and increases the number of trained students with employability skills.

At the institutional level, FREE aims to share best practices at enhancing management systems and university services in relation to women empowerment in academia.

Some universities in the region will have, as part of the FREE program, equality and sustainability centers predicted to have a positive influence on personal development and career satisfaction of women in academia. This would be coupled with an expected increase in the number of research publications on women academic leadership in seven partner country institutions across Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.

The FREE project hopes that such efforts would lead to an increase in the number of female managers and directors at senior and executive levels, and have an immediate impact on its stakeholders and its local community, notwithstanding its effects on female academics, students, professionals, managers, executives, unions, and NGOs.

Satisfaction surveys were sent to all who took the courses and all courses scored an average higher than 4.1/5.

OSB introduces FREE women empowerment to higher education (aub.edu.lb) :
<https://www.aub.edu.lb/osb/news/Pages/FREE-Project.aspx>

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SDG IMPACT

Of the 17 SDGs, FREE contributes the most to:

GOAL 5: Gender Equality

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



LOOKING FORWARD

Despite all the fruitful efforts AUB had made to date, the university still has a road to pave to reach gender equality status. To guide this process, FREE project researchers are suggesting to AUB to implement the Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2025.

This strategy and action is based in a big part on the study and recommendations by the task force appointed to examine the lives and careers of women faculty and discussions in multiple forums with staff, students and faculty members.

This Strategy seeks to support the University's efforts in recruiting, retaining, and helping female staff to advance. Furthermore, the Strategy also seeks to develop and achieve a deeper understanding and commitment to gender equity across the entire organization. This demonstrates our commitment to a dynamic and innovative culture.

Fostering a culture of inclusion and diversity is crucial to achieving this goal, and in today's competitive global environment, the most successful universities will be those that fully utilize the talents and capabilities of all staff.

However, at the time of presenting this strategy and action plan, the country is undergoing major economic, social, and political issues that are impacting the lives of all Lebanese citizens irrespective of their gender. The university is currently trying to solve major issues related to the survival of its faculty and staff members as well as the wellbeing of its students.