

*Thank you!*

## **E-Age Conference 2016**

**Excellences, honorable speakers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen**

On behalf of President Khuri and the entire AUB community, it has been our pleasure to host all of you for the past few days. I trust you have had series of fruitful meetings and the professional networks you have built will prove to be enduring.

It is a great honor for me to deliver the closing keynote speech at this very important forum. I would first, like to thank ASREN for convening their international event here at AUB. I also would like to recognize the great efforts of everyone who has worked very hard to prepare for this successful conference.

*Thank You (applaud)*

Over the last few days, you have been engaged in multiple activities under the umbrella of ASREN! We have just concluded:

- 3 successful conferences : ASREN, AROQA, and OSSCOM,
- Two major workshops on building NRENs
- 3 Regional meetings: AfricaConnect2, EUMEDCONNECT3 and Internet2 Middle east.
- *Wow.....*

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All of these activities are at the core of AUB's mission...at the core of what we and other peer universities are trying to do in the Arab world.... essentially **empowering our best and brightest to achieve their full potential, be they researchers with burning questions or students with the desire to shape the world around them.**

The impact of technology in higher education is the subject of every conference from the hardware that enables, to the software that interprets, from high speed computing to crunch large pieces of data to digital humanities bringing new perspectives to text.

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However, its impact on learning continues to trail mostly due to the classical way we teach, the resistance to changing the “**sage on the stage**” pedagogy. Today's students are hungry for data they can interpret for themselves and for teaching that is customized to their particular way of learning. It does not mean that as teachers and educators we are of no use but it is rather the case that technology has changed the game. It has **expanded** our abilities, it allows us to reach a far wider audience, and it enables learners from all walks of life to embark on a life long journey of learning.

But, at the same time, the impact of technology must not be overstated as the once promise of MOOCs to replace the University, has already proven to be false.

The human contact from each and every one of us, is critical to creating the optimal learning experience for our students, the intellectual environment for our faculty, and the engaging community for our stakeholders. We all know that this cannot be replaced by ones and zeros....

As the poet Rumi says, be with the one that fans your flames. Igniting and fanning the flame of our students is our job.

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But we cannot forget that we are in a region that is constantly tested, clearly struggling with democratic values, secular perspectives, and evidence-based decision making. AUB and other peer universities are hubs of tranquility, where learners and researchers are free to pursue their ideas and their perspectives, where critical thinking and questioning are not only welcomed but are required, where people of all faiths and regions are blended through a community that cares for them all and gives them a voice. This is what gives our jobs meaning.

Technology promises a quick path to globalization and certainly, at the surface level that can be easily achieved. But at a deeper level we cannot simply deliver content from the west to the east without pushing our institutions to examine, understand, discuss and adopt some of the values in context that can enhance our societies.



Equally important, we must push as researchers and educators to create and deliver content which can go from the **east to the west**, to be examined, understood, and adopted by western societies to positively empower their people. You see ... we each have something useful to say to each other, technology is the vehicle to facilitate this exchange.

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We clearly have a great deal to do and this conference and many others like it, are necessary and your participation is critical, to advancing the many objectives we all care about. By your engagement, you have committed yourselves to empowering our youth, to energizing our educators and to being the change we wish to see in the world.

Thank you