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LCN '08 – The first of many

The Lebanese Collegiate Network (LCN) hosted LCN'08, its first Annual Convention, at the University of Maryland, College Park on March 28 & 29. Eleven of the thirteen subscribing University Lebanese Clubs (ULCs) were present along with representatives from six other ULCs.

The weekend was *dabke'd* off with a Hafla Loubnaniya. Close to 100 attendees clasped hands and danced, introduced themselves to LCN board members and one another, and established new friendships.

On Saturday March 29th, Fifty-nine registered students attended the LCN workshops. They were presented with several opportunities to sharpen their professional skills and embolden their academic foundation. Patrick Sislian, LCN President, welcomed everyone and introduced both the LCN Board members and the 11 subscribed ULCs. Patrick highlighted the objective of the LCN and further stressed that the success of the LCN is in the hands of the membership. As Patrick stated, "the LCN is a dream that has become a reality. Its success is contingent on the drive and actions of its membership. This organization has the potential and the resources to serve the Lebanese-American students and alumni professionally and academically."

The first LCN presentation focused on the LCN Constitution and Bylaws. Patrick Sislian and Serge Haddad, LCN Treasurer, navigated through each article with an animated and engaging presentation. They also emphasized on the importance of these documents, how they serve the membership and their fundamental purpose. Attendants were given the opportunity to further inquire in detail about the many articles incorporated in these two documents, and many students asked challenging questions. It was explained that no document is ever perfect, but in order to change it, it is important to follow the amendment process. Several quotes from leaders such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were cited and served to convey the founding members' belief in a strong adaptable constitution. The LCN Constitution and Bylaws were adopted in July 2007. For purposes of celebration, the LCN board ceremonially signed an official copy of the LCN Constitution in the presence of all attendees.

Following the presentation was the ULC Building workshop. First, ten teams of five individuals were formed. These ten teams were composed of student members from each school. Then each team was given a different question to answer. After 20 minutes, each group was allotted five minutes to present their answers on stage. Questions ranged from: "What does your ULC do to raise money?" to "What benefits do you offer non-Lebanese students?" A complete list of all responses during this workshop can be found at www.lebanesecollegiatenetwork.org/LCN08.

The "How to Run an Effective Meeting" workshop was next. Robert's Rules of Order was cited throughout the workshop. Students were asked several questions such as, "If a main motion is on the table during a meeting, can a second motion be made?" Examples of drafting agendas and minutes were further shared. Attendants asked great questions and shared personal challenges they had at their respective ULCs.

Both workshops engaged the students by facilitating discussions between ULCs. New event ideas were brought up that inspired ULC's to strengthen their own activities. Vera Richa, from Rutgers University



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commented on the workshops by saying, "One of my favorite parts of the LCN Convention was the ULC group activities. I enjoyed getting to know other ULC members while at the same time gathering great insight and advice from them. I jotted down a few new ideas for fundraisers that I plan on running at Rutgers. Also mentioned were clever ways to get faculty and students involved in ULC events. Overall, I walked away with a better sense of the potential my ULC has to grow and prosper. I can't wait until next semester! Thanks LCN for putting together such a wonderful and informative workshop!"

The workshops were capped off with a real LCN Board Meeting. During the meeting the Board appointed the LCN Election Committee and passed a resolution unanimously to recognize the Lebanese Student Organization at UMD for their efforts in hosting the LCN '08 Convention. Afterwards, the LCN 2008-09 Board elections were conducted. Eight LCN Presidents took part in the elections, which were supervised under the direction of the LCN Election Committee: Kristina Winbladh, Rina Daghljan and Shadia Kawa. The ULC Presidents had the opportunity to hear each candidate and ask them insightful questions. The election results for the 2008-2009 Board-Elect is:

President – Patrick Sislian
Secretary – Ramzi Nasr
Treasurer – Bruno Atieh
Vice President of Events – Serge Haddad
Vice President of Membership – Sevag Sislian
Vice President of Information Technology – Karim Khoury
Vice President of Public Relations – Diana Ayoub.

The convention concluded with an Awards Ceremony Dinner on Saturday Night. The dinner gave students a wonderful opportunity to hear the message of acclaimed Professor, Dr. Suheil Bushrui, a well known and respected author, poet, translator and media personality in the United States, the Middle East, Africa and India. In his speech, Professor Bushrui reminded the attendees of their duty to Lebanon: "Be grateful, cherish [Lebanon], promote its interests, protect its unity, enhance its influence, and live a noble life that will honor your great country... I recognize that we represent here in this gathering the diversity that is the chief characteristic of Lebanese society — for Lebanon is a nation born of many cultures, religions, and ethnicities; it is also a nation whose sons have, since the dawn of history, peacefully traveled the world for commerce and trade. Lebanon is also a nation that has enriched the world with the contribution of many Lebanese who became themselves, immigrants in various lands. And indeed this gathering here today represents many faiths and traditions that all originate from a diversity of nations and civilizations."

The LCN '08 Awards Ceremony Dinner ended with the presentation of the Academic Excellence and Heritage Award and the Most Outstanding ULC Award. The Vice President of Membership, Sevag Sislian, presented the Academic Excellence and Heritage Award to Kristel Bou-Lahoud of the University of Southern California. Along with a certificate, Kristel received a \$500 monetary prize in recognition of her notable academic record and her leadership in the Lebanese-American community. The Lebanese Social Club at UCLA earned the Most Outstanding ULC Award. Former LSC President, Amanda Rizkallah, and LSC member, Fuad El-Khoury, were present to accept a certificate, a \$250 award and a perpetual plaque. The plaque will be returned at the next LCN Convention to pass on to the next Most Outstanding ULC Award winner.

Please visit the LCN website at www.lebanesecollegiatenetwork.org/LCN08 to view photos, see the presentations and download helpful tools to strengthen your skills academically and professionally. Remember, none of this is possible without generous financial contributions from people like you. Your generosity strengthens the mission of the LCN. The LCN is enthusiastic about the future. There is great potential for this organization to grow. The LCN would like to especially thank all those who believed in the LCN and those who continue to foster its growth. Together we can truly make this goal a reality.