**The Vision for the Region**

We are witness to the transformative changes under way in the Near East and in the Arab peninsula. The population shifts from around the globe converging on this region present enormous challenges and unprecedented opportunities in every sector of healthcare.

Over the past decade, a number of leading American medical schools have launched various forms of healthcare and academic medicine initiatives in the Middle East and Gulf region. These initiatives include centers for clinical care and patient referrals, programs in medical education and continuing medical education (CME), and clinical and basic medical research. Despite nearly limitless resources directed by governments towards bringing American medicine to the region, these efforts have faced significant obstacles, most notably:

a. *Lack of local Universities* with histories and traditions in medical education or research, which qualify to act as academic partners and/or ‘homes’ for their American counterparts.

b. *Difficulty in retaining medical and paramedical staff* to sustain the yearly growth and development of robust institutions of medical education, research, or even clinical care delivery. This is due to the difficulty in convincing North American physicians, nurses, trainers, and technical staff to spend extended periods of time outside their countries, especially in the distinct cultural and social norms of the Middle-East.

c. The absence of University-based academic centers and sustainable long-term faculty appointments has inevitably led to *difficulty in attracting students and post-graduate trainees* to pursue their medical education and subspecialty training in these centers, many of which are still in the process of being established.

d. *Accreditation of post-graduate training programs of American medical schools in the Gulf region by accrediting agencies in the USA, most notably the “Liason Committee on Medical Education (LCME)” and the “Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)”* has not been forthcoming. Lack of ACGME accreditation for American medical programs outside the continental USA (and its territories) denies eligibility to their post graduate trainees for either American Board certification or clinical Fellowship training in American medical centers.

These challenges to American medical schools in the region present an excellent opportunity to LAUMS to play a constructive role in facilitating the success of these initiatives, while positioning itself to benefit greatly from their presence.
This is because LAUMS enjoys the following distinct advantages:

1. It is based in a *University* which enjoys a long history of academic achievements and tradition, and, more importantly, is set on a path for expanding and strengthening its undergraduate and post-graduate programs in the humanities and the sciences (recent LAU “Strategic Plan”). Furthermore, LAU already enjoys an excellent reputation and a record of excellence in Pharmacy, as well as rapidly growing programs in the basic sciences. This not only provides a welcoming environment to which high quality basic scientists and medical investigators can be recruited, but also a constant feed of highly talented students and future trainees.

2. Lebanon is unique in the region in being ‘friendly’ to visiting or relocating faculty from America or Europe. In part, this is due to its multi-lingual liberal atmosphere, Mediterranean weather, proximity and easy access to Europe, and its natural and other attractions. It has excellent high schools and colleges for families of potential recruits.

3. LAU will recruit faculty from Lebanon, as well as from the rich pool of Lebanese-American expatriate medical graduates in the USA and around the world. This is a diverse and highly talent-packed pool of potential recruits to an American-style medical school at LAU will provide much-needed stability, longevity, and productivity potential to its faculty, and a reassuring environment for prospective students and trainees.

Given these strengths, LAUMS aims for regional pre-eminence by adopting strategic objectives, the overarching theme of which is the establishment of triangular collaborations among regional medical centers, their partners in American medicine, and LAU.