

Prime Minister Karapetyan Visits AUA

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YEREVAN—The American University of Armenia (AUA) hosted Armenian Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan on Jan. 20, as he toured the campus and engaged with students, staff, and faculty. Most notably, Prime Minister Karapetyan was present at the kick-off event of the Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center (EPIC).



Prime Minister Karapetyan speaking at AUA (Photo: AUA)

The Prime Minister was greeted at the entrance of the Main Building by AUA President, Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian, Provost, Dr. Randall Rhodes, Vice President of Operations, Mr. Ashot Ghazaryan, and Vice President of Finance, Mr. Gevorg Goyunyan. Fr. Mesrop Aramian and Mr. Vasken Yacoubian, trustees of the University, were also present, as were Mr. Armen Avagyan, advisor to the Prime Minister and an adjunct lecturer at AUA, and Mr. David Sahakyan, Deputy Minister of Education and Science.

The tour began with a review of the history display in Mihran and Elizabeth Agbabian Hall, containing articles and pictures recounting the founding of the University. Then, AUA President Der Kiureghian led Prime Minister Karapetyan on a tour of the Collaborative Study Area and the AGBU Papazian Library. In the library, the Prime Minister chatted with students and watched them make use of the library facilities in a welcoming environment conducive to students' studies and creative work. The Prime Minister remarked that it would be great to be a student again and study at AUA. The group then briefly stopped at the Honor Wall, where AUA's major donors are listed. Der Kiureghian noted that the University is funded primarily through private donations.

While in the Main Building, the Prime Minister also toured the newly furnished computer laboratories in the ground floor. Dr. Aram Hajian, Dean of the Zaven and Sonia Akian College of Science and Engineering, spoke about the College and its upcoming Bachelor of Science program in Engineering Sciences. Dean Hajian noted that the new program, pending WSCUC approval, will explore synergies among science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and enable students to address the challenges of Armenia, the region, and the world. Furthermore, Dean Hajian spoke about the Engineering Research Center's (ERC) ongoing collaborations with multinational companies including the Samsung Group and Mentor Graphics.

Operations Manager of the EPIC, Aram Keryan, then led the Prime Minister on a tour of the EPIC laboratories, where students were working with state-of-the-art equipment, including a 3D scanner, 3D printers, and CNC and vacuum casting machines. Here, Levon Stepanyan, a Computer Science major working with IESM Program Chair Sarkis Zeytunyan, showed the hip replacement design that they developed in collaboration with a professor at Harvard Medical School, which recently hosted Levon for a working visit. The Prime Minister remarked that the EPIC labs have great potential in working and liaising with various industries, and that he looked forward to facilitating those contacts.

This was followed by a visit to the EPIC offices and 5th floor tiered classroom (Small Auditorium), where 10 teams pitch their projects and development plans to enter EPIC Startup Incubation program.

A separate meeting with AUA's Executive Team was then held. During the meeting, Prime Minister Karapetyan was happy to learn that AUA has Extension offices in various parts of the country and requested that Extension services be offered to regional government staff and rural entrepreneurs as a part of government's rural development program. On the way to a Q&A session with AUA students, the Prime Minister stopped by the Large Auditorium to see the newly installed energy-efficient remote-control lighting system of the hall.

The Alex and Marie Manoogian Hall was filled to overflowing with curious students eager to engage in an informal discussion and Q&A with Prime Minister Karapetyan on a broad range of issues. The most memorable question was from a female student, who asked if a woman could become the Prime Minister of Armenia. She confidently remarked that the University prepares students well for this position. The Prime Minister said that Armenia can, of course, have a woman PM and went on to wish success to the student in her pursuit of her dreams. In remarks to

the AUA student body, the Prime Minister shared his vision for Armenia, which is “independent, just, safe, and intellectual.” He noted that having an educated, intellectual, and informed population is the key to the nation’s development and, therefore, each student has a role to play in building the future of Armenia. Prime Minister Karapetyan’s wish for each student was to be independent, engaged, and to love their homeland. Moreover, it was the Prime Minister’s high hope that AUA’s students continue to develop and prosper so the positive environment fostered within the University could proliferate nationwide.

At the end of the meeting, President Armen Der Kiureghian presented the Prime Minister with a gift in appreciation of the Armenian Government’s role as one of the three entities (along with the AGBU and the University of California) that founded the University 26 years ago. The Prime Minister stressed again how impressed he was by what he saw and that AUA should continue the dialog with his office and instructed his staff to work with the University to accomplish these goals.

Founded in 1991, the American University of Armenia (AUA) is a private, independent university located in Yerevan, Armenia and affiliated with the University of California. AUA provides U.S.-style education in Armenia and the region, offering high-quality, graduate and undergraduate studies, encouraging civic engagement, and promoting public service and democratic values.