

American University of Armenia

The First Grads Come Back and Give Back

The American University of Armenia celebrated the 10th anniversary of its first graduating class on October 9. Established by the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the University of California and the Republic of Armenia, the AUA opened its doors on Independence Day 1991.

Independent, private and non-profit making, the AUA is housed in the building where Soviet Communist leaders met to hold international congress meetings up until that year. With the state's limited resources, the university's success depended heavily on the success of the first graduates. Thirty-eight young men and women graduated in Business and Management, 10 in Industrial Engineering and five in Earthquake Engineering. A decade later, the AUA boasts 1,000 graduates, including a handful from the Diaspora. Wider degree choices now include Law, Comparative Legal Studies, Business Administration, Public Health, Political Science and International Affairs, Industrial Engineering and Systems Management. More recently, the university has added Computer and Information Science and Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Before the day's commemorative events, each first year graduate donated US \$100-\$200 – amounting to \$3000 – which provided the main library with an air conditioning sys-



tem. An alumni dinner for 40 was based around the message of 'Giving Back'. A poem penned by the class of 1993 was read aloud and placed onto plaques prepared for Mihran Agbabian, Louise Manoogian Simone, Armen Der Kiureghian and to the family of the late Professor Stepan Karamardian. A slide show of messages from graduates who now live and work abroad was followed by a video featuring a montage of the university's opening ceremony, the first graduation and the first alumni dinner.

"I am very happy to see in such large numbers the graduates of our first commencement. I relived the first years of the University with these graduates. Those years, 1991-1993, were the beginning of a new vision for the education of the youth of Armenia. These graduates are now in important positions serving Armenia and mankind. I now realize, seeing them after 10 years, that AUA has succeeded in its mission," says Agbabian, AUA's Founding President and now President Emeritus. ■