



ARAB BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

www.abtslebanon.org

Newsletter - November 2014

EEAA Team Visits ABTS, Recommends Degrees for Accreditation

In October, ABTS staff and faculty focused on the accreditation visit that took place at the end of the month. We prepared hundreds of documents and submitted them to the European Evangelical Accrediting Association (EEAA). A two-member VET (Visiting Evaluation Team) came from EEAA to evaluate our readiness for accreditation and to make a recommendation to the EEAA Council for its meeting in April 2015.

During its visit, the VET met with ABTS leadership, faculty, staff, the Board of Trustees, graduates, and students. They evaluated our programs and wrote three different reports covering all ABTS degrees, including the Bachelor of Theology, the Master of Divinity and the Master of Religion in Middle Eastern and North African Studies.

In its reports, the VET has affirmed the quality of our programs and is recommending to the EEAA council that all our degrees be accredited. The reports

include one additional requirement for accreditation as well as some recommendations. The ABTS academic team is currently working to fulfill the requirements by March 2015, before the EEAA Council votes in April 2015.



VET member Bernhard Ott addressing students, staff and faculty during morning devotions



Elie Haddad and VET member Bjørn Øyvind Fjeld signing the VET visit report



VET meeting with ABTS leadership team

The VET reports and recommendations are a very important milestone in the life of ABTS. After 54 years of ministry, we are now operating at a level of quality comparable to top educational institutions around Europe and the rest of the world. This was not an easy achievement. This landmark is due to the hard work of numerous faculty and staff and years of continuous improvement that ABTS has experienced in its 54-year history. Our current team has done an outstanding job, but we cannot overlook the rich heritage that we inherited. We have the privilege of reaping what many have sown for over half a century.

In this Issue | The EEAA Accreditation Visit [Page 1](#) | ABTS' Student Affairs [Page 2](#) | Prayer Requests [Page 3](#)

www.abtslebanon.org | www.facebook.com/ABTS.Lebanon

+9614400250 | information@abtslebanon.org | Mansourieh El Maten, Lebanon - P.O. Box 60

Interview with Dean of Students Bassem Melki

Bassem Melki does not just lead our Student Affairs Department, he's a pastor, a musician, a husband, a father of two, and a doctoral candidate in his "spare time". But at the intersection of his many interests, we find his mission to encourage, love, and support people in Lebanon and around the world. Here, with ABTS' communication team, he discusses the different projects and ministries of the Student Affairs Department at ABTS and how his team of five staff and faculty members works towards the transformation of our seminary students.



What is the primary ministry of the Student Affairs Department?

Our main ministry in the Student Affairs Department is to pastor and care for the students and provide an environment for transformation. Throughout the year, in addition to mentoring, counseling and conflict resolution, we plan retreats and trips for our students. We try to tie these trips to something educational and promote togetherness and fellowship. We go to historical sites like Beit el-Dine which is interesting for both Lebanese and international students. We also take entertaining trips like a trip to the snow last year. Through these trips we hope to relieve the pressure by getting the students away from ABTS. We hold one retreat in the fall where we go for two days and sleep somewhere else. We held this year's retreat at the end of October. We talked about how we can have negative emotions and how they can affect our lives and what steps we can take to have healthy hearts and minds. So we focus for two days, we have fun, we play games. This quickens the integration of new students. We also plan for our compassionate care ministry. Many of our students are married with children and we take the children on outings as well.

What about the Student Affairs Department's role in the spiritual growth of our students?

Student Affairs is also in charge of spiritual events like prayer meetings or Bible studies aimed at personal spiritual growth. The Bible studies are a place where students can give their opinions and engage with the Scripture, making it practical in their own lives and cultural settings. Student Affairs handles the daily chapel program throughout the year. There are student committees with whom we work to run the chapels and everyone gets a shot at speaking, from students to faculty and staff. The chapel service is for degree credit and all students are evaluated. It's like a lab where we do evaluation for speakers and there's an intake of spiritual disciplines. Student Affairs opens the door for students to do practical ministry throughout the year by connecting the students to local NGOs and churches. Students can serve refugees or orphans, minister in Sunday Schools, or find teaching opportunities. We also connect students further through our mentoring program, although it's something against the culture here. We connect every student to a mentor each year. The students can access, build relationships and trust with, and get feedback and advice from their mentors.



Bassem teaching a class

What additional programs does Student Affairs run for ABTS students?

We also run seminars for the students on topics ranging from domestic violence to hygiene and water usage. These seminars are suggested by students. Our department likewise identifies needs to address through seminars. We talked about bullying last year because there were several incidents. Parents needed to be educated and their children as well. Sometimes we work with faculty and staff members. One suggestion that originated out of discussions with the faculty was conflict resolution. It's not in the curriculum but we thought, 'how can we graduate someone without conflict resolution

skills?' Seminars are not mandatory, and the time and frequency is worked out with students to fit their schedules, but are typically on Saturdays. Most students show up to these seminars whether they are involved in them or not because they want to know more.

Interested in partnering with ABTS? Support the mandate of our Student Affairs Department by contributing to projects such as our annual retreat (US \$3,000). For more information, contact Partnerships Manager Wissam al-Saliby at walsaliby@abtslebanon.org

What plans does Student Affairs have for the future?

We feel honored to play an effective role in students' lives. What programs could bring more change and have a stronger impact into their lives? On a more simple scale, we want a gym here! On a larger scale, we hope to visit different countries and connect with alumni to learn from them and help them feel supported. We'd love to be more connected with churches and NGOs and be more effective at plugging in those students and building a broader base for experience. My passion is in Lebanon. The Lebanese haven't healed from the war and my mission in life is to encourage, love, exhort, support, see people succeed and be successful, and hopefully bring healing into their lives. This was my mission even before starting my PhD (in peacemaking), now it has been confirmed.



Students' children outing organized by Student Affairs, 2013

What are your prayer requests?

The main area we ask prayers for is the transformation of the students that we care about the most. We pray for opportunities. Whether there's conflict or weaknesses, we consider them opportunities and we pray that God uses them for transformation and change. We pray for unity between the students. All our prayers are towards students.

Please pray the current courses and modules end well, for a good Christmas vacation that allows our students to relax, and that our students' children are able to experience joy and happiness. This year, we are all chipping in as faculty to buy gifts for the children.



ABTS students ministering to refugee children, part of our compassionate care ministry, 2014

Our Prayer Requests and Praise

This month we praise God that our accreditation visit at the end of October went well. We prepared hundreds of documents and submitted them to the European Evangelical Accrediting Association (EEAA) and ultimately the vetting team affirmed the quality of our programs and is recommending to the EEAA council that all our degrees be accredited.

Please pray for our staff and faculty to be good role models for the students. Pray that we allow our new students to feel at home and that we serve them to the best of our abilities. Also, please pray for our library to grow and that we receive the support needed to purchase necessary resources.

Prayer Request of Second-Year Student Atallah

The situation in the Syrian city of Kharabah, where my pastor is from and my church serves, is getting worse because the militant Islamist groups surround the city. Last week they entered the city and shot at my church's cross and attacked my pastor's home. Please pray that God keeps the church building and the people safe from the dangerous political situation and the increased instability. Please pray that the church and the pastor's family who still live in Kharabah will not be exposed to danger.