



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Robert Sauer

Phone: +93 (0) 794 858-501

Email: rsauers@usaid.gov

American University of Afghanistan Holds First Commencement

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN | MAY 26, 2011 – Thirty-two students from the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) celebrated their graduation during a commencement ceremony today that marked a milestone in their lives. The students, including eight women, climbed the stage with great pride and gratitude to receive bachelor's degrees in business, information technology, computer science, political science, and public administration.

Congratulating the graduates, U.S. Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry said, "I am so impressed by what you have accomplished and by what this still new, but vibrant and rapidly growing university has achieved." He also commended the 32 students for pursuing degrees despite trying circumstances, adding that their achievement is evidence of the resilience and determination of the Afghan people to overcome obstacles and triumph over a troubled history.

The graduation was also significant because it is the first commencement ceremony in the history of the university. Following the award of a USAID grant to launch the start-up of the university, AUAF opened its doors in March 2006, and welcomed the first group of students entering the Foundation Studies Program, an intensive college-preparatory program. Since 2008, USAID has supported AUAF through a \$42 million cooperative agreement. Under the agreement, AUAF will strengthen its existing academic programs, significantly increase enrolment, augment faculty numbers, and intensify its fundraising efforts, all of which will increase the university's sustainability.

During the ceremony, Dr. C. Michael Smith was invested as the president of AUAF. Dr. Smith thanked the U.S. Government for its generosity and commitment to support the University. He also expressed his pride for the achievement of these promising and persistent graduates, many of whom worked full time jobs while pursuing their education.

AUAF currently offers three four-year undergraduate degree programs in business administration, information technology and computer science, and arts and sciences, as well as the Foundation Studies Program, which offers intensive English language preparation courses. To date, enrollment has reached a combined total of 789 students (21 percent female). The all-English curriculum is based on the American university model with a strong foundation in the liberal arts. AUAF also offers academic programs in business and information technology to meet the needs of a developing economy and society. # # #

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