

Center seeks help studying emigration

BEIRUT: An academic center dedicated to the study of the Lebanese diaspora is searching for several graduate student interns for the coming semester.

The Lebanese Emigration Research Center at Notre-Dame University in Louaize opened its doors five years ago. The interdisciplinary center focuses on the impact of emigration on the social and economic life of Lebanon and host countries. It is the only such center in Lebanon.

Emigration has huge effects on Lebanon today, dampening the country's viability and economic well-being, said Guita Hourani, associate director of the center. Between 1975 and 2007, 1.2 million Lebanese left the country to live abroad, although there are no reliable figures about how many have returned.

"When you lose young people and the highly educated, the country will not be able to maintain its competitiveness," Hourani said.

Current topics of study at the center include a higher number of women emigrating over the last five to 10 years, the rights of Lebanese abroad to participate in elections, and the problem of "brain drain" as highly educated Lebanese chase economic and academic opportunities. The cen-

ter is also overseeing an increasing number of studies focusing on immigration to Lebanon.

Lebanese have gone abroad in huge numbers since the 1800s. The number of people of Lebanese descent living outside the country is an estimated 8 million, double the current population of the country when including non-Lebanese who live here. Of the 8 million abroad, approximately 2 million hold Lebanese citizenship. But Hourani noted that her numbers are only estimates, as it is difficult for researchers to attain statistics.

What is easy to see is that many Lebanese abroad have become enormously successful in their adopted countries, whether in business, politics or other fields. "The importance of the Lebanese abroad is not because of their numbers but because they worked hard and succeeded," Hourani said.

Interns can assist in the center's research in a range of ways, from database programming to preparing outreach programs or conducting field research. Hourani stressed that interns gain valuable hands-on experience, while bringing energy and skills to the center. "They're not treated as junior with a small j," Hourani said of her interns.

"They're treated as junior with a capital J. They're given responsibilities, their names appear on our publications if they work on them, and they write articles and represent the center."

Candidates should be current graduate students or recent graduates; between the ages of 20 and 30; and have strong organizational, intercultural, language and computer skills. The internships are unpaid. Candidates from diverse academic backgrounds, including finance, law, history and statistics are sought.

Interested candidates should apply by September 27 for the fall 2008 semester or by November 15 for 2009 internships. Applications should include: a letter of intent, CV, 250-word biography, photo, photocopies of degrees obtained and two recommendation letters. International applicants should also send proof of a grant or personal funds to cover travel and living expenses for the duration of the internship. Applications should be e-mailed to Associate Director Guita Hourani at ghourani@ndu.edu.lb with subject line: Application for LERC/GUSIP 2008/2009.

More information is available online at www.ndu.edu.lb/lerc.
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