

**A Word from the President and the Rector**  
**Opening of the 2016/17 Academic Year**

Dear faculty members, staff and students,

The opening of a new academic year is always a festive occasion which brings forth hopes for a fruitful, interesting and challenging year. We are delighted to open the 2016/17 academic year with all of you!

As is the case every year, the campus will see many new students who will begin their academic journey with us in an unfamiliar environment. Adapting to a new place is not always easy and that is why it is vital that you know that the faculty and staff at the University are here for you.

This year, not only new students will begin their journey at the University. Both of us, the President and the Rector of the University, have only just assumed our new roles at the helm of the University. At this point, we are delighted to introduce ourselves:

**Prof. Ron Robin**, President of the University – I am a Cold War Historian returning after a decade spent at NYU where I served in research and leadership roles. I am returning to the University of Haifa, which has been my warm academic home for over 20 years.

**Prof. Gustavo Mesch**, Rector of the University- I am a researcher in the field of technology and society, specifically on cyber and society, youth internet culture, internet crime and deviation, and more. I come to this position of Rector after serving as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences for the past 3 years.

It is lovely to meet all of you!

In order to bolster our research, enhance the quality of teaching and, in the framework of the national directive to attract Israelis abroad which our best minds home, we have absorbed 38 new and excellent faculty members in the past year. They come to us from the best universities and research institutions in the world and they will continue their transformative research on campus. They will also teach our students and impart their knowledge and know-how to them.

Proof of the excellence of these new faculty members is the growing number of research grants they have received and won.

This year, the University of Haifa reaps the fruits of its investment in research promotion in general, and the absorption of new faculty members in particular. This year we have seen a significant increase in the University's share of the PBC (Planning and Budgeting Committee) research model. These additional resources will enhance the academic and physical development of the University and the status of the University as a leading research institution in Israel and abroad. At this time, we would like to convey

our gratitude to Mr. Amos Shapira, the outgoing President, and to Prof. David Faraggi, the outgoing Rector, for their tireless work in this regard.

We are undoubtedly on the verge of a new era. At this time, the University is destined to sign several strategic collaboration agreements with leading research institutions in Israel and abroad which will accelerate its academic development in selected fields and in general.

Parallel to the absorption of new faculty members, we have opened quite a few new and innovative programs, including new international programs. For example, we have established a graduate program in Asian Studies with emphasis on Asian markets, a graduate program in Israel Studies with emphasis on Heritage Curatorship, a joint graduate program with the Technion in Behavioral Economics, and many more excellent programs. In addition, we have initiated a PhD program at the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, and German Studies.

We have invested significant resources in improving vital facilities for teaching and research. There is of course always room for improvement but we aspire to do the best we can and provide the best possible facilities for research and teaching. In the past year, we have initiated the construction of the of the new home for the Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences as well as construct new laboratories and classrooms, both on and off campus. In the coming year, we shall begin with the expansion of the building of the *Herta and Paul Amir Faculty of Social Sciences* - an addition of four floors.

All of these investments in our infrastructure are made possible through the support of our friends, both in Israel and around the world. We have also been fortunate to receive investments in applied research through our sister company *Carmel, University of Haifa Economic Corporation Ltd.* This past year has seen a significant increase in gifts and investments.

Science and the research are international enterprises; however, we cannot forget our unique geographical location in the North of Israel. We are the largest research university in the Northern part of the country. Our role is to strengthen this region and the entire country. In order to increase our impact on this region, we increase our involvement in the life of the City of Haifa and its surrounding areas. We are already involved in countless projects but we need to get even more involved. I urge you, the University of Haifa Family, to strive to integrate our already rich social and cultural activities with that of the City of Haifa and its people.

We are proud of the fact that our university, more than any other, is the mirror image of the diverse composition of Israeli society. In our classrooms and laboratories, you will find Arabs, Druze and Jewish researchers, soldiers and civilians, religious and secular researchers and students, *Olim* alongside veteran Israelis and citizens of the center as well as the periphery. We believe that we are able to create a common denominator for all groups represented in our society. As such we serve a vital function for

continued prosperity of the State of Israel. The University of Haifa is a wonderful example of pluralism and coexistence. At times, our cultural diversity can create tensions; however, we must not be shy of this. Tensions are also part of any liberal and democratic society and we need to acknowledge the fact that we can learn from disagreements. Our human diversity creates valuable opportunities for us to innovate both in teaching and in research. We strongly believe that exposure to those who are different makes our graduates better equipped to deal with the culturally diverse working environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century both in Israel and around the world.

It is important for us to hear your thoughts and, in addition to regular and impromptu meetings, we shall continue to conduct satisfaction surveys whose results we shall publish and learn from.

We wish to take this opportunity to convey our gratitude to the faculty members and staff at the University, the Student Union, and the students for their cooperation and contribution. Without this support, we cannot succeed.

We are beginning a challenging year in an environment fraught with challenges. Together we can surmount all difficulties.

We, at the University of Haifa, are proud to be an excellent research and teaching university, here, in the North of the country, in an atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance of the other. All these make us strategically important for the continued prosperity of the State of Israel.

To everyone, new and veteran, young and old, students, researchers, faculty members and staff; we wish a fruitful and enjoyable academic year!

Sincerely,



Ron Robin  
President



Gustavo Mesch  
Rector