

LF-Future alliance takes USJ elections

By Ghinwa Obeid

The Daily Star

BEIRUT: A Lebanese Forces – Future Movement alliance won decisively in Thursday’s Saint Joseph University elections while the independents took a large proportion of votes, according to a Lebanese Forces statement.

The alliance won the student councils in 15 faculties, while a Hezbollah-Free Patriotic Movement coalition won five.

Despite political alliances between different groups, the independents managed to clinch the remaining five faculties. The independents took seven seats with six seats going to the Hezbollah-FPM alliance in the Faculty of Medicine. The student council for the faculty is comprised of 13 seats.

At the Faculty of Pharmacy, the independents won six seats with five seats going to the LF-Future Movement alliance.

In the Faculty of Dentistry, the independents won a list of 11 seats by acclamation, according to LF’s statement.

The Hezbollah-FPM alliance won in five faculties in Beirut while the LF-Future Movement alliance won in 15. The LF won in two faculties in Zahle.

The atmosphere was calm on the Beirut campus of Medical Sciences and Nursing in Mathaf in the lead up to the elections.

“[The independents] are a group of students who don’t belong to anyone and our aim is to engage in the student elections where student’s interest is what matters,” Elias Lattouf told The Daily Star.

A medical student, 20-year-old Lattouf was running on the independents list that was facing off with the LF-FPM alliance. Lattouf, according to USJ’s results, won as the president of the student council for the Faculty of Medicine.

“We are a large team and so our electoral program was placed on different levels, be it social or academic.”

Lattouf explained that since USJ

elections follow a proportional system both lists have the opportunity to be represented on the student council.

“My faith in the student council is high because it will be comprised of both lists because of the proportionality law,” he said. “We might differ in our understanding of politics, but on the ground there is one interest which is that of the students.”

Medical student Ronaldo al-Kaddoum was a supporting the competing list.

Kaddoum, 18, was campaigning

for the team on the ground ahead of the elections.

“It’s natural for the alliance that took place outside [in Lebanese politics] would have a positive impact on the students,” he said. “But it’s not the basis [of student elections], because in other faculties [the FPM-LF] alliance isn’t present.”

Kaddoum, who is also a member of FPM’s national council, said that the list he represents is willing to work with the independents, saying that the overall interest of the students and the university is what matters.

“We will not be eliminating anyone,” he said. “Regardless of what the results were, we are willing to cooperate with the other team.”

One of the things that was common between the competing groups was a desire to implement practical ideas, rather than make promises they couldn’t keep. They also focused on academic-related matters.

“The program was [the result] of brainstorming from the whole team on ideas and projects that can be implemented,” Lattouf said.

“Unfortunately, the student

councils that are being elected are focusing more on organizing events rather than improving the campus. We have ambitions to change this,” Kaddoum explained.

After the polls at each USJ branch closed, The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections issued a statement evaluating the electoral process through its observers.

“The elections took place in atmosphere of relative calm without any security problems in most of the branches,” the statement said.

A few violations were recorded on the Huvelin campus in Ashrafieh



(The Daily Star/Mohammad Azakir)