

## **Rector's Welcoming Address 29/9/2022**

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome today students from twenty-eight countries who have joined our two English-taught undergraduate programs, the “BA Program in the Archaeology, History, and Literature of Ancient Greece” and our new “Medical Degree in English” program. We are pleased to have with us students from countries around the world such as Albania, Australia, Canada, China, Cyprus, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Georgia, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, India, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, the Maldives, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America. Each of you will be one of approximately seventy thousand undergraduate and postgraduate students of our University. More than two thousand members of teaching staff are willing to assist you during your studies.

I also welcome the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, Mrs Niki Kerameus, who has supported these programs since the very beginning, and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Andreas Katsaniotis, who has always been by our side whenever we have requested the Ministry’s help.

The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens builds on foundations which were laid over one hundred and eighty-five years ago. It has attained recognition as an Institution of educational and scientific excellence and as a source of intellectual wealth for our country. By merging tradition with innovation, the University of Athens has been the first Greek University to launch an undergraduate

program in English, exclusively for foreign students, the “BA Program in the Archaeology, History, and Literature of Ancient Greece”. I take the opportunity to mention that the University of Athens is ranked by QS among the first seventy Universities in the world in Classics & Ancient History.

Furthermore, this year we introduce of our new “Medical Degree in English” program, which has immediately been accepted enthusiastically by more than one thousand four hundred (1,400) candidates from forty-four (44) countries worldwide. One of the program’s primary goals is to attract the very best internationally. Forty of those are here with us today after a very demanding selection process.

In fact, internationalization has been a cornerstone goal of our ten-year strategic plan. Especially for research Universities like ours, internationalization is reflected in dealing with the impacts of interlinked ‘global challenges’. During the pandemic of COVID-19 for example, our academics and researchers have been working closely with their counterparts in foreign Universities and research centers to produce new knowledge and provide high-level health services for the benefit of the State and society. The pandemic has disrupted the way in which Universities have been traditionally operating. According to the United Nations, the pandemic has caused the largest disruption of education systems in history. For the first time in years, Universities had to cope with such a multidimensional and indeterminate threat, which has evidently negatively affected the international mobility of students. Nevertheless, our University has turned this challenge into an opportunity. Not only have we been ranked 46<sup>th</sup> in the world by the

US News - Best Global University Rankings in Infectious Diseases, but also we launched our two English-taught undergraduate programs. And the best evidence of our success is **you** who joined these programs. It is for us an honor, but also a great responsibility. We hope our efforts will gain momentum in the years to come, for the benefit of research, education, and for our graduates' personal and professional success. We endeavor to make all of you not only highly employable, but also able to gain influence and respect in your interactions with academics, researchers, and the community in general.

Dear All,

Your joining our University comes with a lot of expectations on your part, your parents and friends, some of which we have the honor to have with us today. All of us want to see you succeed in your studies. I encourage you to enrich yours and other students' experience. Be on the lookout for new knowledge and everything that a foreign, historic University and a cultural city have to offer. The first months may be demanding; you will find yourselves in a foreign country, study there, and start getting accustomed to a new culture. But by actively participating in our academic community, you will meet new people, learn things, and gain personal experiences you will keep for the rest of your lives. But it is not only you that will benefit from all the above; every time you return home for the holidays, you will bring a whole new set of experiences and perspectives to your family and friends. I also encourage you all, at the end of every semester, to give us your opinion as to what inspired you, what worked well, and what could have been better.

I hope and trust that this will be an enriching experience both for you and for those you will get to know during your stay. Thank you everyone for selecting our University for your studies and welcome to our country!