

# AUS | CONNECT

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI AFFAIRS



## His Highness Hails the Bonds Between AUS and its Graduates



His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi addressing the alumni and the guests of University in the presence of Trustees Hamid D. Jafar, Riad T. Sadek, Maroun Semaan, and Abdul Jalil Darwish, Chancellor Peter Heath and Vice Chancellors Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah and Salem Al Qaseer, and AUSAA President Ahmed Al Jbori and alumnae Hind Seddiqi and Bedour Al Raqbani

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and Founder and President of American University of Sharjah (AUS), has praised the strong bonds developed between the University and its graduates, during the Sixth Annual Alumni Reunion Dinner held at AUS on January 17, 2013, considering it a key sign of the University's success. The event attended by over 2,700 alumni is organized by the AUS Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, is a homecoming celebration where alumni from all over the world convene back at AUS.

The event also witnessed the announcement of a AED 15 Million to establish "The Ahmed Seddiqi Chair in Gulf and Middle Eastern Studies" by Mr. Abdul Hamid Seddiqi, Vice Chairman, Seddiqi & Sons, 12 master's scholarships awarded by the AUS Alumni Association to the AUS graduates and the opening of a new AUSAA Chapter in UK.

Addressing the alumni, His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah said, "When we see you here, you remind us of the old days. It makes me happy to remember that I have shaken hands with each one of you (during their graduation ceremony). I consider these ever-stronger bonds as a key sign of the success of our wonderful University; the

University is dynamic and vibrant with your presence and your continuous return."

The Sharjah Ruler said that AUS has become renowned for its academic excellence as, since its inception, it has been committed to maintaining high standards and accepting only the very best of applicants. His Highness also appreciated the hard work and dedication of the University's board members as well as its faculty and staff members.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Peter Heath, AUS Chancellor, welcomed the alumni and said, "You alumni are the spirit of AUS. Your boldness in doing things the right way and your accomplishments are the reason for our high reputation. Thank you for all that you have done for AUS and thank you for returning to campus."

"AUS is also on a roll moving ahead with a burst of energy. I am pleased to report with a sense of pride about our achievements during the past year, which speaks to unbridled optimism for our future. While the overall economy throughout the whole world is hampered by uncertainty, AUS continues to thrive. We continually look for ways to improve the University to attract the best



His Highness greeting the alumni in attendance along with Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani, Dr. Amr Abdul Hamid, Chancellor Heath and Vice Chancellor Mourtada and other officials

students, give the best education with the best facilities possible. I like to call this an instinct for improvement that has been in AUS's institutional DNA from its very beginning. This assertive march forward is the reason for our excellence, which will be even better tomorrow," said Dr. Heath.

Chancellor Heath thanked AUS Trustee Riad T. Sadek for his unwavering support of the AUS Alumni Association endeavors as well as his continued personal contribution to their many undertakings including his support to the Alumni Reunion Dinner since its inception. He also thanked the prominent sponsors that include the UAE Central Bank, in collaboration with the banks operating in the UAE, as the event's main sponsor; Unilever, the event Employer of Choice sponsor, has also been one of the contributors to the AUS Business Network Alumni Scholarship Fund among four other prominent organizations who were recognized during the evening; Hyundai that provided the very trendy automobile raffled this evening and owned by fortunate AUS Alumnus Omar Bargouthi; and Construction Machinery Company (CMC), which has always supported one of the University's institutional advancement objectives by providing a grand prize.

Chancellor Heath elaborated that "Partnerships with private corporations are the lifeblood of any modern University and we at AUS feel blessed with those among us

this evening. We thank all of our corporate partners who are here today for their incredible generosity and their support to the institutional mission and vision."

"His Highness transformed Sharjah into the educational and cultural oasis of the Gulf which has welcomed all those who wish to perfect the skills of the mind," said Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, AUS Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs. "You, our successive distinguished cohorts of graduates, embody the vision of His Highness to generate the knowledge, build the fabric of the societies, and produce the trained professionals and human capital for generations to come. Cultural heritage and education will continuously fortify our people in a sea of global changes."

Vice Chancellor Mourtada also emphasized that "To put all of this into perspective, AUS provided the "road map" on how to prepare students to be the shapers within the globalized market. As the global market is multi-ethnic and culturally pluralistic, AUS was a model of cultural plurality from its very inception. Every entering class has students from at least 60 different countries, which come together in the classroom, in discussion groups, in the dormitories and even on athletic teams. And its alumni conjoin into a very proactive Alumni Association that further strengthens its impact every day across the world."



AUSAA President Al Jbori presenting an artwork to His Highness on behalf of the Alumni Association in the presence of Chancellor Heath, Vice Chancellor Mourtada, AUSAA Board members Ahmed Al Naqbi, Ahmed Al Reyami and Abdullah El Shazly, and alumni Rami Jaber and Firas Hammad

(1) The light show on the AUS Main Building

(2) Chancellor Heath presents a token of appreciation to Mr. Assaf Quraishi of Unilever

(3) Mr. Khaldoun Abdulhafiz of Hyundai giving the key to Alumnus Omar Bargouthi, winner of the 2013 model Hyundai Veloster, in the presence of AUSAA President Al Jbori

(4) AUS alumni at the sixth Alumni Reunion Dinner

(5) Chancellor Heath presents a token of appreciation to Ms. Rola Al Mehaid, representative of United Arab Shipping Company



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)

In celebration of the sixth reunion, the AUS Alumni Association presented His Highness with an artwork by the UAE renowned artist Dr. Najat Meky. The AUS Alumni Association also announced names of winners of 12 scholarships awarded to its members to attend graduate school at AUS in the fields of their choice. The awardees were Dana Taleb, Ahmed Al Mani, Hiba Nasser, Thouraya Ghalayini, Adnan Tasneem, Mustafa Kashif, Bahaa Awni Shehadeh, AlHaytham Al Qudsi, Naser Al Sughaiyer, Mohammed Taher, Wesam Belal and Mai Muhtaseb.

Also present at the Reunion Dinner were AUS Trustees Hamid D. Jafar, CEO, Crescent Petroleum, Riad T. Sadek, Chairman, Al Habtoor Leighton Group, Abdul Jalil Darwish, Chairman, UAE Enterprises Group, and Maroun Semaan, CEO, Petrofac; H.E. Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani, Chairman, Al Faisal Holding along with the Qatari delegation; H.E. Saeed Al Raqbani, Special Adviser to the Ruler of Al Fujairah; Dr. Amr Abdul Hamid, Special Advisor to the Ruler of Sharjah for Higher Education and Scientific Research; H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani,

Director General of Sharjah Statistics Centre; Mr. Abdul Hamied Seddiqi, Vice Chairman, Seddiqi & Sons; H.E. Eng. Salah Al Shamsi, Chairman, Liwa Investment; H.E. Ahmed Ali Al Zaabi, Deputy Director, Dubai Protocol; Mr. Mishal Kanoo, Deputy Chairman, Kanoo Group; Mr. Majid Jafar, CEO, Crescent Petroleum; Mr. Badr Jafar, President, Crescent Petroleum; Mr. Seif Al Ghafli, CEO of Al Hosn Gas; Mr. Samir Khoury, Executive Vice President of Operations, Deputy Executive Chairman and Director, C.C.C.; Alumna Hind Abdul Hamied Seddiqi, Vice President of Marketing, Ahmed Seddiqi & Sons; Mr. Assaf Quraishi, Vice President of HR, Unilever North Africa and Middle East; Alumnus Saeed Al Salkhadi, Managing Director, Protocol School of Washington; Mr. Tony Ashton, President of Hyundai; Mr. Faisal Yaseen, General Manager of Hyundai, Juma Al Majid Group; Mr. Jassim Al Baloushi, Representative from Sharjah Islamic Bank; Alumna Bedour Al Raqbani, Director and Founder of Kalimati Speech and Communication Centre; and Alumna May Barber, Director, Office of Sheikha Fatima bint Hazaa' bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

# Sharjah and Beyond: “The Art Scene in this part of the World is attracting International Attention and Curiosity” Says Alumna Sheikha Nawar Al Qassimi

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

My name is Nawar Ahmed Al Qassimi and I graduated from the College of Arts and Sciences with a degree in mass communication and advertising in 2008. A couple of years after graduating I began to look for a job in Sharjah where I could work in the field of culture and be able to develop the skills I learned during my University years. I joined the Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF) in 2010 and have been working there for a little over two years now.

*Could you briefly describe the nature of work of the Sharjah Art Foundation and its vision?*

The Sharjah Art Foundation is a non profit government institution that focuses on bringing contemporary art and cultural programs to the communities of Sharjah, the UAE, and the region. Although it was just formed in 2009 it has built on the history of cultural collaboration and exchange that began with the first Sharjah Biennial in 1993, which today is one of the most important cultural events in the region and is recognized internationally.

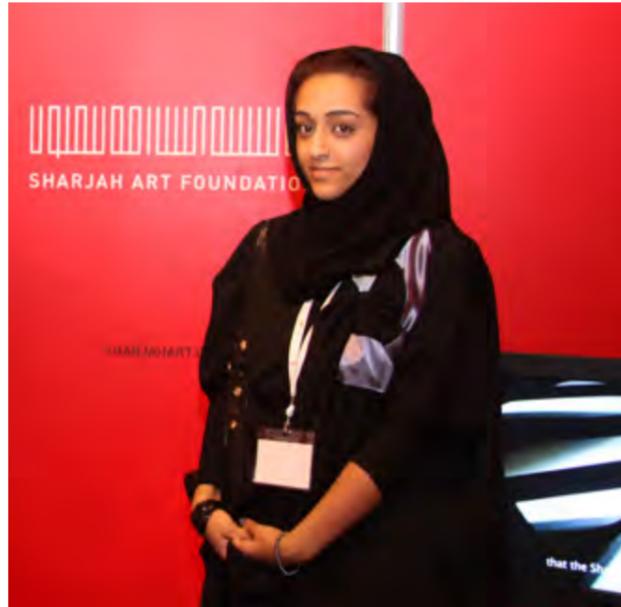
SAF now works with local and international partners and creates opportunities for artists and artistic productions through core initiatives that include the Sharjah Biennial, the annual March Meeting, residencies, production grants, commissions, exhibitions, research, and publications. We also have extensive educational and public programs that focus on building recognition of the central role art can play in the life of a community by promoting public learning and a participatory approach to art.

*On a typical day in your position as the Public Programming and Outreach Officer at the Sharjah Art Foundation, what do you do?*

My role at the Sharjah Art Foundation involves forming relationships and working with local organizations and institutions, this includes schools and universities. I also work with members of the local community to develop and initiate public programs that are sometimes planned and realized with other local or regional partners. A typical day would consist of coming up with projects and initiatives that tie into our current exhibitions, visiting schools and universities to talk to students about our work, meeting with other local organizations and trying to find ways of collaborating that will benefit the people of Sharjah and the UAE.

*What part of this job do you find most satisfying?*

They say that there is high job satisfaction in the field of arts and culture, and I would completely agree. It



Sheikha Nawar Al Qassimi, Sharjah Art Foundation booth at Sharjah International Book Fair 2010; photo courtesy of Sharjah Art Foundation

is very rewarding to work with the public and to see the benefits of the projects within the community. Also, when the importance of our work is recognized, and I see how it reflects on Sharjah, not just locally but internationally as well, it gives me a great sense of fulfillment.

*How has your major in mass communication equipped you to effectively deal with interpersonal communication and with specific skills to reach larger audiences or markets?*

What I found the most beneficial from the mass communication program at AUS was the broad range of classes we took as undergraduate students, aside for my core classes I took courses in public relations, journalism, and film all of which are really helping me in my work today.

*AUS prides itself on partnerships between education and cultural organizations like the Sharjah Art Foundation. What collaborative opportunities do you think could be established between the two organizations?*

We signed a Memorandum of Understanding with AUS in March 2011, and have been working closely together since. The students at AUS are always our priority when we bring important or interesting artists and prominent cultural figures to Sharjah. For example in March of this year we screened the Middle East Premiere of 1395 Days Without Red, by Sejla Kameric and Anri Sala, in collaboration with Ari Benjamin Meyers, a cinematic project commissioned by Artangel UK, at the main auditorium at AUS. We had a panel discussion with the



Artist Heman Chong speaking at CAAD Auditorium in October 2012; courtesy of Alfredo Rubio

artist and faculty members from AUS. On December 16 of this year we are bringing Christian Rattemeyer, the Harvey S. Shipley Miller Associate Curator of Drawings at the MoMA (Museum of Modern Art in New York) to speak at AUS.

There are always opportunities for students in the form of internships, which then can turn into permanent positions at the Foundation, in addition to workshops and exhibitions. We have invited students to work within one of our exhibitions and in the end they were able to incorporate their work into parts of the show. The opportunities are endless.

*Tell us more about the themes of Sheikha Hoor Al Qassimi's recent exhibition?*

Sheikha Hoor bint Sultan Al Qassimi, President of the Sharjah Art Foundation and daughter of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah has curated an exhibition entitled “In Spite of it All.” It presents a range of artistic responses to some of the most pressing issues we are faced with today and is a response to the current situation of the Arab world. Some of the themes that are explored in this exhibition are the personal and social cost of rapid economic and urban development, the struggle with a past that confronts a corrupt and changing present, notions of individual and collective resistance, and survival in the face of stagnant political or social situations. These works, which are primarily videos, were originally shown at previous Sharjah Biennials between 2003 - 2011, and include the work of 14 artists such as Sharif Waked, Maha Mamoun, Rashid Masharawi, and Lui Wei.

Speaking of her recent exhibition, Sheikha Hoor Al Qassimi stated that “collectively, these artists’ works engage with the ongoing period of tumultuous transformation our world is currently mired in. They

“The art scene in the UAE is rapidly growing, there is international attention - both curiosity and interest - in what is happening in this part of the world”

explore the effects of modernization, experiences of violence and terror, and the feeling of being imprisoned by a faceless system resistant to change, which shape the lives and subjectivities of contemporary individuals. Problematizing the promise of a better future and challenging nostalgic references to glorious histories, they work to cultivate a historical consciousness and a critical engagement with the past.”

*What can you tell us about the art scene in the UAE?*

The art scene in the UAE is rapidly growing, there is international attention - both curiosity and interest - in what is happening in this part of the world. In the UAE specifically there are so many arts initiatives that are emerging and the importance of art and art education is now recognized across the Emirates. Sharjah, of course, has always been a pioneer in this field and has recognized and developed art and culture for over 20 years now, which has always been His Highness’s vision, but it is a collaborative effort among all the Emirates now. So it really is the best time to be involved in the art field in the UAE, either in a career or as an artist.

*What helpful suggestions would you give students who choose arts as their career?*

You have to be aware of what is happening around you and be involved in the field. You cannot be an artist or a curator without actually being around art and artists, a degree is not enough. It is a process that will take time. My advice to students is to go out and meet people. There is always something to see in the UAE, Sharjah alone has over 16 museums! At SAF we always have an exhibition on view and put on new ones every month or two, you can sometimes catch three at the same time. You also do not have to be an artist or have an arts background to work in the field of arts. Organizations and museums need people from all different backgrounds!

## His Highness Inaugurates “The Beauty Of Words” Exhibition At AUS



His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi inaugurates the exhibition with Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani along with Chancellor Peter Heath, Provost Thomas Hochstettler and Vice Chancellors Mr. Salem Al Qaseer and Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, and other officials

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of the American University of Sharjah, inaugurated a unique exhibition comprised of rare and distinctive Islamic artifacts on October 7, at the Rotunda of the AUS Main Building. The Ruler of Sharjah praised the exhibition and appreciated the efforts of the organizers in bringing the exhibition to AUS. The exhibition, entitled “The Beauty of Words”, is being held in collaboration with the Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani Museum in Doha, Qatar.

In a statement recorded in the museum’s visitor’s book, Sheikh Dr. Sultan thanked Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani for sharing this distinguished collection of Islamic art and for providing an opportunity to art-lovers and enthusiasts in Sharjah and the UAE to view these exceptional pieces. His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan toured the exhibit and inspected the large selection of more than 100 items of Islamic calligraphy on display. The special exhibition consists of a large number of unique artifacts that include items of wood and stone, metalwork, pottery and glass, textiles, and carpets as well as manuscripts.

The opening was also attended by Abdullah Al Owais, Chairman of the Department of Culture and Information, Government of Sharjah; Hisham Al Mathloun, Director of Arts at the department; Dr. Amr Abdel-Hamid, Special Advisor to the Ruler of Sharjah

for Higher Education; Dr. Peter Heath, Chancellor of AUS; Robert Waller, Consul General of the United States of America; senior officials of AUS; along with members of the media and the general public.

Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani expressed his gratitude to the Sharjah Ruler for giving him and the museum the opportunity to organize the exhibition. He praised Sheikh Dr. Sultan for his vision and for his appreciation and vast knowledge of the culture, heritage, and history of the region. “This exhibition is a keen reflection of the cooperation between AUS and the Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani Museum,” he said. Sheikh Faisal is one of Qatar’s leading entrepreneurs and is regarded as a key player in promoting the heritage and culture of Qatar. He pioneered the establishment of a heritage venue, with the objective of revitalizing public interest and appreciation of local culture.

Dr. Heath speaking on the occasion, said that part of the mission at AUS is to work to link the Islamic past with the present so that the two can be joined in the future of our students. “This exhibition is a perfect example of how our University is trying to do this. If we don’t try to preserve the past, our University will be much diminished. I urge our students, faculty and staff to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity,” he added.



His Highness tours the exhibition with Chancellor Heath, Provost Hochstettler, and Vice Chancellors Al Qaseer and Mourtada, and other visitors



His Highness tours the exhibition with Sheikh Al Thani, Sheikha Al Anood Bint Faisal Al Thani, Chancellor Heath and Vice Chancellors Mourtada and Al Qaseer, and other dignitaries



His Highness looks at a unique historical piece at the exhibition with Sheikh Al Thani, Chancellor Heath, Provost Hochstettler, Vice Chancellor McDaniel, and other dignitaries

## Du CEO Speaks to the AUS Community on the New Digital Age



Mr. Osman Sultan addressing the audience

Eminent industry pioneer, Mr. Osman Sultan, Chief Executive Officer of Emirates Integrated Telecommunication Company, du, delivered an inspiring lecture entitled "The New Digital Age at the Heart of the 'Youniverse'" at AUS, on November 26.

Addressing the packed hall, of over 250 students and alumni, on the impact of the digital age on the new organization of societies at economical, societal and individual dimensions, Mr. Sultan explained that "the world never stops changing and change means evolution and in the world of digital change, there is always new evolving technologies, that brings new capabilities and behaviors, which in turn brings new business players."

A highly acclaimed speaker with distinguished oratorical skills, Mr. Sultan briefed the audience on the exhilarating world of digital and social media. He said that "being connected" nowadays is becoming a basic human need. "I believe that we should not miss the opportunity that the new digital age will contribute to the region," noted Mr. Sultan.

He also urged the audience to be part of the continuously changing structure of the digital world by ensuring an adequate supply of technologically-trained workers, and building the ability for learning and knowledge management. "There's a new master in the digital world, and that is you, the new 'Youniverse", emphasized Mr. Sultan.

Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah welcomed Mr. Sultan on campus and noted that "he has indeed brought life to life through his insights." "The Career Advancement Executive Lecture Series is organized by the Office

of Development and Alumni Affairs to bring to AUS a number of high profile and leading business experts to allow AUS graduating seniors to connect and interface with high powered professionals in their respective fields," highlighted Vice Chancellor Mourtada.

Osman Sultan was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company du, in January 2006, and tasked to set up and develop the company to be a key player in the telecom industry in the region. Today du is the world's fastest growing telecom; it has more than four million active mobile subscribers and has reached more than 37% of the mobile market share in the UAE in only three and a half years.

He came to this position after spending eight years at the helm of the Egyptian company for Mobile Services (MobiNil); a company he helped set up and developed in 1998, to become the first Mobile Telephony Operator in Egypt. His vast experience includes managing operations in several countries in Europe, North America, and the Middle East.

The lecture was held by the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs as part of its "AUS Career Advancement Executive Lecture Series" in collaboration with AUS academic units, and was followed by a lively question and answer session. The event was also attended by H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al Thani, Director General at Sharjah Statistics Center; Mr. Eyad Shihabi, Managing Director at HP; Mr. Mustafa Kaddoura, Vice President - Commercial at Dubai World; Mr. Jamal Lootah, HR Senior Director, Du; Mr. Walid Ibrahim, Du CEO, Chief of Cabinet; AUS colleges/school deans, faculty members, staff, students, and alumni.

## Prominent Alumnus Samir Khoury of CCC Shares His Thoughts



It was great news for me when I learned in 1999 that the American University of Sharjah was going to start an EMBA program in the School of Business and Management. I rushed my application in immediately and was pleased to receive back a letter of acceptance from Dean Wadih Atiyah in November 1999.

Since I graduated in 1973 from the American University of Beirut (AUB) with a degree in civil engineering I have been working with Consolidated Contractors Group, popularly known as CCC. My job duties included assignments on construction sites and office work in the Middle East and Europe. I consider myself a lucky person to be associated with a formidable organization such as CCC that over the past 60 years has built numerous projects of great urban and economic significance in the Gulf region and in the world. The success of CCC is a testimony to the abilities of the Arab people to work hard and achieve their goals, and is also an example of enlightened and adaptable leadership that enshrines social responsibility and work ethics in its business values system.

Achieving goals in business is the culmination of a process where the required resources are utilized correctly and in a timely fashion. Our CCC experience has taught us that the human element is the most valuable of all resources. The continuous efforts to train and to develop the workforce are essential for the survival and advancement of corporations. The quote attributed to the futurist Alvin Toffler, "Illiteracy will not be defined by those who cannot read and write, but by those who cannot learn and relearn" applies to people and equally to organizations, and hints at the

way forward to the future.

I was fascinated by the project to build AUS by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council, Ruler of Sharjah. The palatial design, the outdoor facilities and green areas, and the energetic building momentum produced an impressive campus in record time. This was paired with a modern and capacious program of studies offered by recognized academicians and able administrators. AUS is a true manifestation of His Highness's strategic vision and determination to build the future of the country on the solid grounds of knowledge and culture. Sheikh Sultan's life is an ongoing story of work and giving to his people, the UAE, and to the advancement of the human being through education. AUS is one outspoken statement on this.

AUB is a great institution for higher learning with an illustrious history that goes back more than a century. I remember my days there with an immense sense of delight and belonging. I cherish the memories of the friendships fostered there and of my life at the campus, which is also very impressive overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, and a green oasis in bustling Beirut. A beautiful campus endows the educational process and gives the students a sense of privilege and esteem, as learning prepares them on their passage into the real world.

I joined the EMBA program at AUS because I believe in education and self-improvement as positive contributors to one's sense of purpose and value. It was a great experience. Our class group included government officials, managers of private sector companies, both local and multinational, and business people.

The interaction and exchanges of ideas and experiences within the group were very stimulating and enriching, and they were cultivated and conducted by dedicated professors who worked hard to give this new program a successful start. Back as students again, new friendships were made within our group and with the teachers, as we all gained insights into the practices and approaches to doing business in this part of the world.

The AUS EMBA experience was very rewarding for me. The take home value was enormous. A feeling of revival and new awakening was instilled; know-how was elevated and augmented by fresh and updated knowledge; and most importantly new valued friendships were made.

# Chancellor Heath's Sixth Alumni Reunion Dinner Address



First and foremost, let me say that AUS has an exceptional leadership team, which starts with the foresight of His Highness, Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, our President and Founder. Our trustees have been without peer since the founding of this institution, and who have provided very special insight in how to implement His Highness's vision. Our trustees hail from the most successful of businesses, law practices and prestigious universities on three continents. But training students to succeed in an ever-changing world is our *raison d'être*. I am pleased to report that each successive class has gotten bigger and better. This year's freshman class of 1300 pushed our total enrollment to over 5,700 for the first time in AUS history.

You can thus readily see that AUS is not standing still while basking in its well-deserved reputation for excellence. Each year's achievements are surpassed by those of the following year. This Reunion Dinner is a marvelous example, which is the result of dynamic leadership put forth by the AUS Alumni Association in conjunction with the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, under Vice Chancellor Dr. Nada Mourtada Sabbah's able leadership.

In sum, AUS is in excellent shaped poised for a "take-off" to a new level of excellence. The AUSAA helps to maintain the vital link between you and AUS. AUS can point to you with pride, and say that is a graduate of AUS. This statement carries a strong impact of its own! As I visit the community, CEOs, industry leaders, and prominent figures often comment on how well prepared and professional our alumni are. As AUS moves to new heights, you share in its success. When you tell someone, "I am a graduate of the American University of Sharjah," you can be confident that you have earned the best academic degrees in the entire region. The value of your degree increases with each passing year.

You alumni are the spirit of AUS. Your boldness in doing things the right way and your accomplishments are the reason for our high reputation. Thank you for all that you have done for AUS and thank you for returning to campus.

I would also like to thank AUS Trustee Riad Sadik for his unwavering support of the AUS Alumni Association endeavors as well as his continued personal contribution to their many undertakings including his support to the Alumni Reunion Dinner since its inception.

Our appreciation also goes to our prominent sponsors. As the strategic node for many local banks, we are honored to have the UAE Central Bank, in collaboration with the banks operating in the UAE, as the event's main sponsor from which their contribution supported many of the amenities that you will experience this evening. We thank you Your Excellency Sultan Bin Nasser Al Suwaidi, the Governor of the UAE Central Bank for accepting our invitation to be with us at our festive celebration tonight.

Unilever, the event Employer of Choice sponsor, has also been one of the contributors to the AUS Business Network Alumni Scholarship Fund. I also would like to thank Hyundai that provided the very trendy automobile to be raffled this evening and owned by a fortunate AUS alumnus or alumna.

I also would like to thank Construction Machinery Company (CMC), which has always supported one of the University's institutional advancement objectives by providing a grand prize. Partnerships with private corporations are the lifeblood of any modern University and we at AUS feel blessed with those among us this evening. We thank all of our corporate partners who are here today for their incredible generosity and their support to the institutional mission and vision.

Enjoy this splendid evening, ladies and gentlemen!

**Dr. Peter Heath**  
AUS Chancellor

# Vice Chancellor Mourtada's Sixth Alumni Reunion Dinner Address



allow us to exceed the previous year's achievements. These mission and production of AUS thus has generated its own ever-expanding momentum.

The old British adage that "the proof is in the pudding" holds true for our alumni, for the young graduates are like sampling an exceptionally fine tasting pudding, which gets better each year. The achievements of the AUS alumni speak volumes that no other measure of quality can.

Your Highness, when Chancellor Heath and recently visited London to launch the UK Chapter of the AUS Alumni Association, we came to realize that we couldn't be more proud in hearing about the accomplishments of our alumni. They are the products of the University you charted, built, and staffed. No less than 40 of the 43 graduates present in London had either completed an advanced degree, or were in the process of completing a Master's or a Ph.D. at the likes of Oxford, Imperial College or the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, to name but a few of the highly prestigious institutions represented.

It was even more gratifying to learn how at ease they felt in their world renowned programs based on the thorough and solid training in Sharjah. AUS has ably equipped them for this journey into the frontiers of creating knowledge. Their days spent at AUS remain vividly emblazoned on their hearts as well as by your Highness's guiding presence. They are your protégés in following the path you once blazed on your own distinguished academic career. In essence, your graduates, Your Highness, are the intellectual fruits of the seeds you planted 15 years ago when AUS first opened its doors.

Four years ago at the Reunion, you reminisced that you did not expect to see graduates by the thousands. We all have come to realize, Your Highness, that the alumni have also carried vision far and wide. The greater numbers of alumni each year who return to this homecoming celebration are visible testimony to their love of AUS, with your University having opened their minds and widened their horizons. They also have already ventured forth to London or Washington, DC in sufficient numbers to start new chapters of the AUS Alumni Association.

At every turn in each country of the GCC and beyond, Chancellor Heath and I hear echoes of the same profound gratitude for AUS from employers—especially about how competent and well trained our alumni are. Families also express deep appreciation, for sons and daughters have put the conceptual tools from AUS to good use to reach their life's aspirations. In short, Your Highness's vision in building the much needed manpower of the Arab World, enhancing the reputation of the competencies offered by the GCC, and paving the road to a bright future for the sons and daughters of us all, has now been institutionalized.

They are making a difference everywhere, as evidenced by the high quality of their awards and by their high standards that surpass competitors in all walks of life. They stand head and shoulders above others and compete with graduates of the most highly ranked universities in the world.

We have one phrase to share your Highness. Thank you would seem too trite. Your protégés bear out your guidance to do good for their families, communities and countries. You have single-handedly established a scholastic tradition of the Gulf with a distinguished community of learners that will self-perpetuate for centuries.

**Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah**  
Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs  
& Professor of International Studies

Your Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah, and President of the American University of Sharjah, AUS Trustees Hamid Jafar, Riad Sadek, Abdul Jalil Darwish and Maroun Semaan, Your Excellencies, Dear faculty colleagues, administrative colleagues, and colleagues of the Chancellor's senior staff, distinguished guests from leading firms and institutions in the GCC.

AUS salutes the graduating Class of 2012 as our youngest alumni-to-be and welcomes back alumni from all graduating classes since 2001. In addition to receiving your diploma, members of the Class of 2012 now "graduate" into the ranks of the alumni, and join all of those who have gone before in the acclaimed AUS Alumni Association. Your status thus officially changes from AUS student to AUS alumnus or AUS alumna. As alumni, you are now part of the AUS family for life. You reached this pinnacle by being the fruit of His Highness's seeds he sown in his intellectual cultivation. As such, you oversee and protect AUS's cherished traditions.

Please join me in applauding the graduating class of 2012. Your Highness,

Each January for the past 6 years, we stood before you to celebrate our youngest AUS ambassadors, who are the intellectual offspring of your Highness's vision of what the educated person is capable of being.

It takes especially-trained young men and women of vision, skill, and motivation to change the world around them for the better. This is the mission that you charged to your faculty 15 years ago. That is, to prepare the very best in terms of human capital to advance the countries of the GCC. This evening, we see before us thousands of alumni fulfilling this lofty task.

And during each of the subsequent six January reunions, we wondered what could be done, if anything, to surpass the splendor of the previous Alumni Reunion Dinner. We soon found out, Your Highness, that the answer was quite obvious for all to plainly see.

Simply put, it is through ever-mounting achievements of our alumni themselves—whose increasing awards, accession to higher positions in all professions, worldwide reach, graduation with honors from the finest graduate and professional schools, and invitations for employment from the most discerning firms—are the key ingredients that only accelerate in quality and number and

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## “Having Practical Protocol Knowledge Today is Significant,” Says H.E. Ahmad Ali AlZaabi

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*With a background of more than 18 years of experience with significant exposure and expertise in managerial positions, H.E. Ahmad Ali AlZaabi, Assistant Director General of the Protocol Department of His Highness the Ruler’s Court, Dubai, who graduated from AUS with an EMBA degree in 2002, has covered vast and diverse prime duties. These posts range from strategic to operations management including finance, HR, projects, customer relations, event management, and certainly, protocol!*

*The duties of the Assistant Director General of the Protocol Department in Dubai are quite significant. Would you give our readership and fellow graduates a brief idea of the vast purview of what these duties entail?*

The Protocol Department in Dubai manages and organizes local and international protocols for His Highness the Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai, the Crown Prince of Dubai, the Deputy Ruler of Dubai, members of the Ruling Family, VIPs, and official visitors to the country. We accomplish this in accordance with the highest international standards which reflect the image of Dubai and the cultural heritage of the UAE community.

In my position as the Assistant Director General of the Protocol Department, I manage the administrative, financial, and logistical matters pertaining to the protocol functions as well as the strategic vision of the department.

*The American University of Sharjah prides itself on the quality of its education and the high caliber of its graduates who have come to occupy prominent positions in all walks of life across the GCC and beyond. Would Your Excellency care to share a few highlights of what his AUS education brought and reminisce about fellow graduates in your early cohort of alumni?*

In addition to my previous educational background studying at AUS, especially the subjects that I took and the relationships that I built with the students and professors, shaped my personality and created a major social complex of my character that enabled me to deal with individuals in various manners based on the context of the situation. It also helped me in better understanding people and in initiating dialogues. All of this added to my experience in dealing with staff members and different constituencies related to my work.

*What would you consider the most challenging aspect of your duties?*

In my diplomatic yet delicate position, I would consider creativity to be the most challenging aspect. The Protocol



Department is always exploring the future and preparing itself for the challenges of the upcoming phases of development. These new phases promise immense responsibilities and obligations, which in turn require additional efforts on every level on how to perform them in an innovative fashion. The mission of spreading civilization, promoting social coherence, and showing true Arab hospitality in a creative way to visitors and friends, as it is considered a unique characteristic of all Arab Gulf societies, is the most challenging part of our job.

*What specific goals, including those related to your profession, have you established for your life?*

I can say that I have gained knowledge through my education and it is complemented by my professional experience. My main aim is to play a role in achieving the vision of His Highness the Ruler of Dubai in transforming Dubai into an international model city with sophisticated landmarks that continue to impress the entire world. The mission of our department is not only to shed light on the true characteristics of our Emirati society, but also to hold dialogues and communicate with others in order to consolidate our Arab concepts of protocol and hospitality.

*You recently expressed your continuous support for the Protocol School of Washington (PSOW) during the*

*launch of its office in Dubai, which is managed by fellow alumnus Saeed Al Salkhadi. How would you describe the future of partnering the Protocol Department and the Protocol School of Washington with AUS in various initiatives?*

Our relationship with PSOW started in 2009 after we signed a MoU to conduct its International Protocol Managers Training Certificate Program, under the patronage of The Protocol Department. Our main aim is to spread protocol awareness in the UAE and strive to carry on our ancestors’ mission of spreading civilization, promoting social coherence, and showing true Arab hospitality to visitors, as this is a major component of our social values. These reasons drove us to partner with PSOW, as part of the Protocol Department’s strategy to constantly strive to foster awareness and education on protocol matters and to support and advance the protocol profession. Cooperating with AUS could be done through offering protocol training courses to develop the required skills and competencies of AUS alumni and staff.

*If you had one recommendation to make to your fellow alumni what would it be?*

I would like to state that the policies and strategies of protocol have great implications on decision making nowadays, which could influence nations. For instance, dealing with a protocol and etiquette educated person is very different from dealing with a person who has no knowledge of etiquette foundations. This can be seen through the etiquette of speaking, food, etc. Thus, I advise alumni to have practical protocol knowledge because we live in a very challenging world, which requires high qualifications, including protocol and etiquette education in order to overcome the challenges of the competitive skills and competencies available in the job market.

*Would you like to share with us some of your hobbies?*

Sports are my favorite hobby, specifically jogging, during my free time.

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## Entrepreneur Alumna Iba Masood Wins Cartier Women’s Initiative Award

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Alumna Iba Masood, co-founder and CEO of Gradberry.com, the Middle East’s first career portal for student internships and employment opportunities for graduates, recently won the Cartier Women’s Initiative Award 2012 as the laureate for the Middle East and North Africa. Iba received the award along with five other international honored recipients, at a gala ceremony held at the Annual Global Meeting of the Women’s Forum in Deauville, France.

Iba is a 2010 finance graduate of AUS. After interning at GE and McKinsey & Company and working as an account executive, Iba left her job to pursue her dream of entrepreneurship, and co-founded Gradberry.com a career portal. Gradberry was created as a hub for student internships and jobs for new graduates in the Middle East. Gradberry currently has a presence in 550 universities globally, and is now posting jobs from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ireland, and the UK. Clients include Google, IBM, and Philips in addition to over 200 SMEs.

To help career-seekers with their CV and general tips, Gradberry runs a lively blog called the Fruit Bowl, where professionals can share advice about the industries they work in, ranging from IT to graphic design and fashion to finance. The blog is free to use and all posts are instantly uploaded to Gradberry’s Facebook and Twitter sites.

Commenting on her award, Iba stated, “I am honored to receive The Cartier Women’s Initiative Award this year. It was a valuable experience to be part of this wonderful journey with Cartier and I am thankful to the team for the professional coaching and financial support to help me elevate my business for long-term success.” It is worth mentioning that Iba’s application was chosen out of 1,000 applications worldwide and was picked above two other candidates from the Middle East and North Africa region.



H.E. Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi presents award to alumna Iba Masood

The Cartier Women’s Initiative Awards were created in 2006 by Cartier and the Women’s Forum for the Economy and Society, in partnership with INSEAD Business School and McKinsey & Company. The awards are an annual international business plan competition for female entrepreneurs. Every year, six recipients receive US \$20,000 which covers coaching support for a full year, access to international networks, media visibility, and an exclusive trophy designed by Cartier.

# Prominent Business Leaders Participate in AUS Job Search Preparation Day



Chancellor Heath moderating a Job Search Preparation Day panel comprised of H.E. Humaid Al Shammari, Mr. Yaser Obaid, Mr. Marwan Al Serkal, Mr. Ammar Hattab, alumnus Saeed Al-Salkhadi, and Dr. Martin Spraggon

The Career Services Division of the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs at the American University of Sharjah (AUS) presented the Job Search Preparation Day (JSPD) in partnership with and the support of senior human resources managers and CEOs from multinational companies. Held on November 8, 2012, the event prepares recent graduates, graduating seniors, and junior students for career opportunities in today's challenging job market.

The inauguration ceremony announcing the launch of the AUS Career Services Portal was followed by a keynote panel of speakers including Sultan Al Hajji, Vice President, Total; H.E. Humaid Al Shammari, Executive Director, Mubadala Aeronautics; Mr. Yaser Obaid, Senior Vice President HR, Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company, du; Mr. Marwan Al Serkal, CEO, Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq); Mr. Ammar Hattab, Partner, Ernst & Young; and Saeed Al-Salkhadi, Managing Director for the Gulf and Middle East, The Protocol School of Washington.

"We are looking for people with drive, not just for a job," said Marwan Al Serkal. "If you're just looking for a salary at the end of the month, you're not going to have a lot of success. At the end of the day, I spend nine to ten hours with my employees-more time than I spend with my family. If you don't give the job the effort it deserves, then you will have a miserable life."

According to Yaser Obeid, "Look for something that you're going to really enjoy. I would also recommend that you find out the areas where you need to improve your skills. In many organizations, human capital is just a tool for economic growth. That's not how we do things at du. At du we look at how we can develop you as an individual. Take risks. If you don't like your company or your position, search for something else."

The day-long event focused on developing specific skills in job searching and interviewing. Students and alumni attended presentations on job search strategies, interpersonal skills, career exploration panels on engineering and business, and mock interviews.

The goal of the event was to build understanding and confidence through knowledge and practice in honing job skills. AUS job seekers build understanding in the theory and techniques of job seeking, so that they can present themselves in "natural" ways with confidence in interviews, which should increase their chances of success. Topics discussed included what to present in a resume and cover letter, how best to present oneself in face-to-face interviews, and common mistakes to avoid.

Encouraging AUS students, Ammar Hattab said, "Be confident in yourself. You should respect and be loyal at

every organization you work with. Work hard. I receive 100 to 200 resumes every year. At Ernst & Young, around 300 interviews are conducted every six months. AUS students are always in the lead in every interview. Most of the candidates who join us are actually from AUS."

Throughout the day, senior human resources and business development officers from leading firms presented CV and cover letter writing skills and interview techniques, and conducted workshops on job search strategies, communication in the workplace, and interpersonal skills.

Participating companies included UAE Central Bank, General Electric, Siemens, Schlumberger, Canon Middle East, 3M, IBM, Standard Chartered Bank, Unilever, Procter & Gamble (P&G), Henkel, HP, Halliburton, du, Abu Dhabi Accountability Authority (ADAA), Arabtec, Transmed, and Naseba.

Present at the opening ceremony were Dr. Peter Heath, AUS Chancellor; Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, AUS Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs; Salem Al Qaseer, AUS Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs; and other senior AUS officials.



Central Bank of UAE



P&G Middle East



Siemens Middle East



Canon Middle East



Khalifa Fund



Naseba

# Alumna Reem Binkaram, A Multi-Faceted Leader

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

I am a local, professional and interior design enthusiast with extensive experience and achievements in that field as well as others, including but not limited to, project design and charity event planning. My career happens to be my hobby as well. I enjoy chasing innovative, creative and genuine ideas, all the while pursuing further knowledge by observing what is around me from art to design to architecture.

My passion for design comes packaged with the proper education and related experience. I completed an undergraduate degree in interior design at AUS in 2002 and immediately started building a career that spans a vast array of projects and roles. I started my career by working on several design related projects at the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority and Dubai International Airport. I am currently working at Karam Group both as a director of procurement and as a designer.

I've been an active member of the Sharjah Tatweer Forum (STF) since 2006, and in February of 2010 was confirmed as a member of the new Board of Directors of STF. Since then I have held the position of head of finance and budgeting for the organization.

Today, I head the events committee of the Pink Caravan, a Pan-Emirates breast cancer awareness campaign. Furthermore, I'm the managing partner of both "Thaya Floral and Gourmet Boutique" and an events management company called "Campaign".

*You obtained your bachelor's degree in interior design in 2002; what are some of your memories of your undergraduate education?*

I enrolled in 1997, the year when His Highness's vision of creating a University city became a reality. My batch was the first to enroll at AUS; we were the pioneers. The five years I spent at AUS were the best years both on an educational and personal level. With the passing of each year we literally saw the University blossom. AUS worked hard on bringing out the best in us as students. What I remember about AUS were the friends I made and the people I met from across the world, the heated debates, the hard work, and Global Day.

*You are a board member of Sharjah Tatweer. Could you kindly share with our readers what your duties are as a member of the board?*

Sharjah Tatweer Forum is a think tank for ideas. It's an NGO that helps people who have ideas for a private business, as well as those who have an idea that can contribute to the competitive advantages of Sharjah and promote its stature and activities. The Forum



does this by ensuring that their ideas are heard and reviewed by the concerned agencies. Some of these ideas are developed into businesses, some are passed on to government entities and some are presented to His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah for support. My duties at STF are helping develop the vision of the entity and the focus of the programs and activities. I am also charged with overseeing the financial affairs of the organization, which includes fundraising and sponsorships to support STF's overall budgetary allocations. Moreover, I am actively involved in the planning and execution of events, such as the organization's annual conference and the Sharjah Startup Weekend. Although I contribute to STF as a volunteer, it is my channel for giving back to Sharjah, supporting and promoting the advantages that I see in Sharjah and a way to keep in touch and help youth attain their aspirations.

*Do you plan to pursue any graduate degree in the future?*

Yes, I am planning so continue my studies.

*In your experience, what are possible challenges for alumnae in the workplace that might be turned into opportunities?*

As a graduate of the American University in Sharjah and before that as an International School of Choueifat student, Arabic is my second language, and thus I am more comfortable with English. In any government position, that would have been a drawback, but in the private sector that has been to my advantage since you don't always find Emiratis who are native speakers of English.

Also, there is a preconception that Emiratis don't pull their weight at the workplace. I think that is a misconception. There are many Emirati nationals who are well educated and highly capable, especially women. They need the opportunity and the motivation to excel. AUS alumnae already face higher expectations in the workplace since they are graduates of a well-respected academic institution. That advantage is also an

opportunity to excel and to prove that a good University education is really an advantage.

*If you had one recommendation to make to your fellow alumni what would it be?*

My one recommendation would be to keep in touch with your graduating class and other fellow alumni. A strong network of contacts is vital and the best way to start is to keep in touch with your friends and classmates.

*Would you like to share with us some of your hobbies?*

I love the arts in all its forms including: fashion, painting, photography, and music. I also like organizing things including the creative side and the logistics. My hobbies are reading, swimming, baking, and volunteering.

## Alumna Tahmina Mehdi Continues To Make Her Alma Mater Proud

My name is Tahmina Mehdi, but my friends call me Tammy. After earning my bachelor's degree in mass communication with a concentration in journalism from AUS in 2009, I interned at Flip Media, the largest interactive agency in the Middle East. Unsure of what career path I wanted to take, I dabbled in website design, content population, and client servicing for a few months. During that time, I had applied (on a whim) to the White House for a spring internship. I had not had any experience or interest in government up until then, so you can imagine my surprise when I received an acceptance e-mail one morning. So I packed up and moved to Washington, D.C. in January 2010.

The following few months were a whirlwind. Working in First Lady Michelle Obama's Office, I was able to gain valuable insight into the mechanisms of government by attending meetings, performing tasks and assignments, and committing to community service by tutoring at-risk students at a local high school. This helped me decide that I wanted to dedicate my life to public service, and I believed that I was in a unique position to make a difference with my background as an American who grew up in the Middle East.

By that time, I had already applied to graduate programs at a number of universities. I chose to attend Syracuse University in New York for the public diplomacy program, a unique two-year dual-degree program that combines an MA in international relations with an MS in public relations. However, just a few days after my acceptance, I was offered a fall internship in the Public Affairs Office at the US Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, and so I chose to defer my admission until the summer of 2011.

At the US Mission, I performed a range of duties from preparing remarks for the US ambassador, to organizing

cultural or media events, to putting together guest lists. Being in the heart of Europe, it wasn't hard to drive and spend weekends in France, Monaco, or Italy. It was definitely one of the most fun and interesting internships that I've done so far, and it sparked my interest in joining the US Foreign Service.

Public diplomacy is gaining importance within governments around the world as a strategic tool to reach out to non-governmental and non-traditional audiences. In our interconnected world, foreign policy decisions have vast implications on all of us, and there is a need for two-way and people-to-people dialogue like never before. It is about finding ways to engage with the average citizen.

Public diplomacy students spend three semesters in New York taking classes, as well as interning or taking classes during the summer – the choice is up to the student. I chose to take classes at Bahçesehir University in Istanbul, Turkey. The final semester takes place in Washington, D.C. in order to complete an internship and take classes in the evenings.

I am currently in the last semester of the program, and interning in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs. This bureau conducts professional, academic, sports and cultural exchanges with citizens across the globe. So far, it's been extremely rewarding and has fed my belief in the need for dialogue through people-to-people exchanges.

This June I will be taking the US Foreign Service Officer Test, a highly competitive four-part test to join the ranks of the Foreign Service at US embassies, consulates, and missions worldwide. It usually takes a few years to be inducted into the Foreign Service, so I'm not sure what comes next for me after graduation!

## Like Father, Like Son: Alumnus Khaled Mohammed Sadiyyah, An Architect in London

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

My name is Khaled Sadiyyah, I studied architecture at the AUS College of Architecture, Art and Design (CAAD) and I'm currently working in London.

*Since you graduated from the CAAD with a major in Architecture, how has your career developed?*

In the last year, since I graduated I was able to participate in the Architectural Association visiting school in Paris. It was there that I met my current employer who interviewed me for a position in his office in London.

*On a typical day in your position, what do you do?*

Depending on the scope of the project, the work I do ranges from preparing 2D drawings or 3D visualizations or putting together reports for project submissions.

*What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?*

It is difficult to sacrifice certain design aspects of a project because of budget requirements or the client's strict design criteria. However, when the client does become convinced of what you are proposing, I'd say that is quite satisfying.

*Are you currently pursuing a graduate degree?*

It is something I will pursue in the future, but not right now.

*Please share with our readership your architectural accomplishments?*

With a few other fellow graduates from CAAD I have helped create and launch an architecture and design publication called WTD Magazine, which aims to draw attention to the non-glossy spaces throughout the Middle East. We are currently working on our fourth issue that we hope to complete early next year. The previous issues are now for sale across the UAE, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia. Most recently, we started selling our publication in New York.

*What artistic aspirations do you have now?*

I've always had an interest in photography but never really gave it enough attention. Currently, I am trying to expand on that interest by contributing photographs to WTD Magazine along with other editorial responsibilities.

*What can you tell us about the art scene in the UAE?*

The art scene is relatively young compared to other places, so unfortunately what is highly popularized is too commercial. There isn't enough diversity and, also, fresh talent is rare to find. On the other hand, there have been significant efforts to encourage local talent, which I think is a step in the right direction.



*In what ways did AUS help you to become a successful architect? And what advice would you give a person entering your field of study?*

The architecture program at AUS definitely helped prepare me for the profession. After five years I was able to build confidence, not only in myself but also in my work, which I find is lacking in a few of my current colleagues. What was especially useful was how the rigorous design process I went through as a student helped me develop the ability to think critically.

For anyone considering studying architecture, I would say one of the most important things is to really enjoy what you're doing and not pursue it if you are not passionate about it. Also, for those currently studying architecture, something to keep in mind is not to take criticism personally and use it to further better develop your work.

*What was your most memorable involvement at AUS?*

Being part of the Habitat for Humanity team in Mongolia is something I will never forget. In the summer of 2009 we were required to take on a work placement but since there were not many companies hiring at the time, a group of us studying architecture and a few of our professors decided to participate with Habitat for Humanity. Having the opportunity to travel to a country I never thought I'd ever visit and experience a completely new culture I knew nothing about was incredible, and being able to help build a house for an entire family was completely rewarding!

## AUS and Total to Collaborate in Areas of Mutual Benefit

American University of Sharjah (AUS) and leading energy company Total, present in the UAE since 1939, recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate in various areas of mutual benefit, at a special ceremony held at the Main Building of AUS.

The MoU was signed by Dr. Peter Heath, AUS Chancellor; Sultan Al Hajji, Vice President, Institutional Development, Total UAE; and Jehan-Eric Blumereau, Vice President, Total Professeurs Associés (TPA).

"We are very pleased to have entered into this collaboration with Total," said Dr. Heath on the occasion. "AUS has always looked to partner with prominent organizations and this agreement will help us explore and develop areas of mutual interest and benefit to aspiring alumni and students," he added.

Part of the educational activities will be provided by Total Professeurs Associés (TPA), a nonprofit France-based association of over 270 Total professionals delivering lectures, conferences and short courses to University students. TPA was established in 2001.

Commenting on the signing ceremony, Al Hajji said, "We are proud to collaborate with AUS, one of the leading educational institutions of repute in the UAE. Under CSR activities of Total in the UAE, capacity building of youth, especially Emiratis, is high on our priority list. This also identifies Total's commitment to the host country for transforming the community into a knowledge-based society as directed by the wise leadership of the UAE. I feel honored and privileged to be associated with this MoU because AUS is highly recognized for its research and development activities. I am confident that our cooperation in R&D will lead to sustainable and innovative energy solutions."

"We are pleased to welcome AUS joining the group of over 100 leading educational institutions, universities and schools collaborating with TPA," noted Blumereau.

"This collaborative partnership between Total and AUS affirms Total's commitment to recruiting AUS alumni and students," said Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs. "This MoU emphasizes the intent of both entities to maintain



Mr. Sultan Al Hajji and Chancellor Peter Heath during the signing ceremony

continuous cooperation and understanding in order to advance supportive ventures for mutual benefit, in addition to the development of new initiatives that serve institutional advancement objectives," she added.

The agreement provides a framework of cooperation and outlines a number of areas of mutual collaboration and lists possible initiatives in this regard. The MoU will facilitate partnership on a wide range of resources, services and input from Total derived from their operations in 130 countries worldwide. The MoU will inter alia enhance transfer of professional know-how and expertise in the field of oil and gas, petro chemicals, information technology, project management and related legal, commercial and human resources aspects. This collaboration will also offer alumni and students opportunities to attend industry-related customized short courses, local and international professional conferences and symposia.

Total has been running Total Summer School annually since 2004 where graduate students attend one-week think-tank seminars and workshops in Paris. AUS students will be eligible to participate in this program. Similarly, Total also organizes Total Energy and Education Seminar in Paris where over 60 professors from all over the world participate in a one-week think-tank seminar and workshop. Two professors from AUS participated in this seminar during November 2012 and their participation will develop under the MoU. Alumni and students will benefit from this MoU as they will be offered opportunities to participate in specific studies and in research projects.

## AUS Privileged Partnerships: An Interview with Mr. Ibrahim Al Hashimi

The Career Advancement Division at the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs (ODAA) pursued considerable efforts to further develop the relationship between the UAE Central Bank and AUS. In May 2012, Career Advancement was privileged to place a prominent alumna, Amira Ballaith, as an IT project manager within the Central Bank. These endeavors have led to the employment of five more AUS graduates: Hind Bin Dhaher, Suhaila Al Falasi, Jamila Al Zarouni, Nour Saleh Al Sulaimani, and Ahmed Al Naqbi in the prestigious UAE Central Bank.



The Career Advancement division of ODAA is engaged with the UAE Central Bank in a variety of activities including introductory information sessions, the Job Search Preparation Day, and their participation as a key partner in the AUS Alumni Reunion Dinner as well as the AUS Business Forum and Career Fair.

AUS Connect was fortunate to have the opportunity to talk with Mr. Ibrahim Al Hashimi, Associate Director of Human Resources at the UAE Central Bank.

The UAE Central Bank participated in the AUS Job Search Preparation Day organized by the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs.

*How would you describe future collaborative initiatives between the Central Bank and AUS?*

We hope to collaborate further by taking on UAE nationals for summer/semester internships, participating in recruitment events, and perhaps offering our technical expertise at various events such as conferences and even classroom lectures.

*The Central Bank currently employs six AUS alumni. Through your interactions with AUS graduates, what qualities distinguish them from others and how has their AUS education played a role in the advancement of the Central Bank?*

We have been very pleased with the current AUS alumni employed at the Central Bank, as they demonstrate excellent English language skills, both written and spoken. They also show good analytical skills and an eagerness to continue their learning.

*The UAE Central Bank is considering an executive training and development course for its staff by the AUS School of Business and Management. What criteria did the Central Bank use in selecting AUS to train its staff members?*

We were very impressed with the quality of education of AUS graduates and the institution's reputation in the region as well as the high accreditation levels. Training our staff members at AUS will indeed enhance their skills and advance their various competencies.

*From a Human Resource perspective and from what you have been able to observe in the UAE job market, what advice would you give new AUS graduates who are in the process of finding their first positions or are just beginning their careers?*

Be willing to work hard and commit to continue learning. As a fresh graduate, any professional experience, good or bad is practice for you at this level in your career. Don't consider any work beneath you, because as you climb the corporate ladder, your experiences in the junior positions will enhance your ability to be empathetic and find innovative ways to get the job done.

## Vice Chancellor McDaniel Contributes to the Overall Well-Being and Long-Term Sustainability of AUS

Dr. Olin Cleve McDaniel, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration has nearly 30 years of experience in higher education, including positions as vice president or vice chancellor at four higher education institutions prior to coming to AUS as Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration. Before joining AUS, Dr. McDaniel was Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration and Chief Operations Officer at the Desert Research Institute of Nevada for over six years. In those positions, Dr. McDaniel had senior responsibility for auxiliary operations, institutional budgeting, facilities management and planning, financial services, human resources, information technology, institutional planning and research, internal audit, public safety, risk management, University health centers, and wellness programs. Dr. McDaniel also has significant experience with a variety of higher education boards as well as institutional, system and statewide higher education committees and governance groups. Dr. McDaniel has taken a leadership role in the implementation of a variety of institutional and system enterprise administrative software implementations, and has led the development of institutional strategic plans and budgets at many higher education institutions, either as an institutional senior officer or as a consultant.



*Many would think that you have complex duties, could you tell us why?*

Many major areas of the campus report to the VCFA: Budget and Planning, Campus Development, Campus Operations, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Information Security, and the University Health Center. So, the scope and range of responsibilities for this office are many. Also, these areas require management of each area both individually and with coordination across the areas. Moreover, my senior-level responsibility for developing the AUS annual budget and related financial information is a complex task, as is working with various levels of campus governance and with the Board of Trustees and its committees.

*If you think of the most important dimension of your job as the VCFA, what would you consider that to be?*

It would be contributing to the overall well-being and long-term sustainability of AUS by making certain that my areas of responsibility operate both as effectively and efficiently as possible.

*You are a PhD holder which is not necessary for a CFO or a VCFA, could you let us know more about your PhD and academic background.*

My doctorate is in Higher Education Administration and Leadership, which directly relates to my position as a senior officer in higher education. In fact, I was in a similar position at another University when I decided to pursue a Ph.D. many years ago (I had a MA degree at a time). Overall, I have over thirty years of experience in higher education, and have been a Vice President or Vice Chancellor at five different higher education institutions, including AUS, over this time period.

*How do you compare AUS to other institutions and corporate entities you have served at?*

I truly appreciate the diversity, quality and uniqueness of the University. I find it a very exciting place to be. Each of the universities or institutions in which I've served has had their own special qualities, but none with the strong international presence of AUS.

*You have had a very fulfilling and successful career, would you comment on what attracted you to AUS and how it fits in your successful career trajectory?*

I have enjoyed each of my positions in higher education. I am very happy that I can share with AUS the experience that I have gained over the years. I consider my role as VCFA at AUS as a "capstone" to my career.

# Alumnus Abubakar Baba Will Utilize His Master's To Set Up Islamic Finance Departments At Universities in Nigeria

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

My name is Abubakar Yusuf Baba from Kano state Nigeria. I am 21 years old and graduated from AUS in spring 2012 with a bachelor's degree in finance.

You are currently pursuing your master's degree. What is the program you are pursuing and in which institution and how is that different from your AUS education?

I am currently pursuing my master's degree in Islamic banking and finance at Aston Business School in Birmingham, UK. Honestly, it is not that different from AUS. People need to realize that if they want a good education, it has to be difficult and there is a need to work very hard. The British system is also intense but due to the training I received at AUS, I'm finding it easy.

*Did your AUS education help you in choosing to pursue a graduate degree? Why or why not?*

Yes, it did. I had the opportunity to take two Islamic finance courses at AUS, which gave me insight into the world of Islamic finance. Those courses were well taught, which triggered my interest in this subject.

*What is the greatest challenge(s) you are facing as you are working on this degree?*

Up to this moment in the course, I wouldn't say I have faced any great or serious challenges. Just the normal hiccups here and there.

*Are you currently employed? And if yes, what type of work do you do? What is a typical day like for you?*

No, I am studying full time.

*What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life?*

Islamic finance actually is a new field in my country, Nigeria. One of my goals is to establish and help setup good Islamic finance departments in some universities in Nigeria using the experience I have gained both at AUS and Aston University.

*What are you planning to do after completing your master's degree?*

Insha'Allah I intend to immediately pursue my PhD degree in Islamic finance. I will probably attend Durham University in the UK, and I have already started making inquiries regarding application procedures.



*Would you like to share some of your hobbies with us?*

I have just recently developed the hobby of playing golf, which I am practicing very hard to perfect. I also enjoy reading self-improvement and finance-related books.

*Are there any comments that you would like to share with the readers?*

When I was at AUS, I complained every step of the way. At one point I even told some friends that when I graduated I would never even visit AUS because I was under so much pressure to meet assignment deadlines all the time. But when I started my master's degree, the training that I got from AUS helped push me and I didn't find the work difficult the way my classmates were struggling. I want to thank AUS for the wonderful opportunity they gave me, and given another chance I would always choose AUS for my first degree. Those that are presently studying at AUS should give themselves the opportunity to get the best. To be truthful, you will hardly find any institution of higher learning as organized as AUS with the strategic dormitories and God bless the Cleanco staff, who are at your service. You will definitely not get that anywhere else. Wherever you go in life, always make your presence felt positively, add value wherever you go and to the people you meet. You must be honest, hardworking, diligent, and always ready to adapt!

# AUS and the Protocol School of Washington Enter a Partnership Agreement

The American of Sharjah (AUS) and The Protocol School of Washington (PSOW), the leader in professional etiquette, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which outlines their future collaboration in various areas of mutual benefit, at a special ceremony held at the Main Building of AUS.

The MoU was signed by Dr. Peter Heath, AUS Chancellor and Ms. Pamela Eyring, President and Director of PSOW, in the presence of AUS alumnus

H.E. Ahmad Ali AlZaabi, Assistant Director General of the Protocol Department of His Highness the Ruler's Court, Dubai, and AUS alumnus Saeed Al-Salkhadi, Managing Director of The Protocol School of Washington, Dubai. Also present were Mr. Salem Al Qaseer, Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs and Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs.

"We are pleased to have entered into this collaboration with The Protocol School of Washington, which is a leading provider of the comprehensive protocol and etiquette training and certification programs available," said Dr. Heath on the occasion. "AUS looks to partner with prominent organizations in fields of mutual interest and this agreement will explore and develop areas of the most mutual collaboration and benefit to aspiring alumni and leadership students," he added.

Ms. Eyring emphasized that "The UAE is now hosting so many special events, from internationally-attended sporting events to presidential visits and the need to understand and work with other cultures has also grown. We are proud to collaborate with AUS, as a leading educational institution highly recognized for its academic excellence, in providing universally accepted protocol and leadership trainings in the highest professional manner. The Protocol School of Washington will offer the AUS



Chancellor Heath and Ms. Pamela Eyring sign an MoU in the presence of Vice Chancellors Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah and Mr. Salem Al Qaseer, Dean Dr. Hashem Dezhbakhsh and alumnus Saeed Al Salkhadi

community the opportunity to gain wide knowledge on cross cultural, diplomatic trainings and international protocol aspects as business etiquette has become a vital skill in today's world."

The Protocol School of Washington has recently launched its activities in the region, with an office in the UAE, the first outside the US, under the direction of AUS alumnus Saeed Al-Salkhadi. Commenting at the signing ceremony, Vice Chancellors Al Qaseer and Mourtada-Sabbah said, "This MoU emphasizes the intent of both entities to provide a framework of cooperation and understanding in order to advance supportive ventures for mutual benefit."

"This collaborative partnership between The Protocol School of Washington and AUS addresses the need for protocol skills, foundational principles, and practical applications which are of utmost importance in a world of rapid progress and evolution, in addition to the development of new initiatives that serve institutional advancement objectives," she added.

The Protocol School of Washington has recently conducted a two-day workshop to hone the skills basic to diplomatic training for members of the AUS Alumni Association Board and Council Members. The workshop, focused on "Cross-Cultural Communication; Forms of Address Business Etiquette," which is especially meaningful in the multi-ethnic student and alumni body of AUS both across the Gulf as one of the most pluralistic societies worldwide. The two-day training included improving cross-cultural communication, leadership skills, and forms of official address and business etiquette.

The agreement outlines a number of areas of mutual collaboration and lists possible initiatives in this regard. The MoU will facilitate partnership on a wide range of endeavors and will also offer alumni, graduating seniors, post graduate students, leadership program students, and executives within the community at large opportunities to attend a training workshop to be offered by the PSOW twice a year on the AUS campus. The workshops will focus mainly on training the various constituencies mentioned above on internationally-accepted standards and skills that will enhance career and professional expertise.



AUS Alumni Association Board and Council members at the workshop

## Alumnus Akbar Moideen Thumbay Takes His Family Business to Greater Heights of Fulfillment

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

My name is Akbar Moideen Thumbay. I was born in Mangalore in India. I moved to the UAE at the age of 15. Following high school I joined AUS where I completed a degree in mechanical engineering, after which I completed a degree in hospital management at the SDA Bocconi School of Management in Milan, Italy. I am currently the director of operations in the healthcare and retail division of the Thumbay Group. The Thumbay Group is a conglomerate of different companies involved in healthcare, education, retail chain management, real estate, trading, turnkey projects, and import-exports.

*In looking back at your upbringing and education, who or what influenced you to study mechanical engineering?*

My decision not to pursue a degree in medicine came as a surprise to everyone in my family, given that my father runs a medical University and a chain of hospitals in the UAE. I had a keen interest in cars and as part of the mechanical engineering program at AUS the final year project was to build your own car. This factor really fascinated me and encouraged me to pursue mechanical engineering.

*On a typical day in your position as the Director of Operations Healthcare and Retail Division at the Thumbay Group, what do you do?*

The Thumbay Group is quite a diversified group, and the health care and retail division takes care of the group's hospitals in Ajman, Fujairah, and Sharjah. The division also oversees an upcoming project in Dubai in addition to retail chain stores including: GMC pharmacies, Nutri Plus Vita nutrition shops, and ZO&MO optical shops. As the director of operations, my day starts at 9:00 a.m. My mornings are extremely busy with a variety of meetings. These can include personal meetings with department heads to discuss their day to day operations; departmental meetings of the quality assurance committee, the purchase committee, hospital facility management committee, and this is just to name a few. During the latter part of the day I am usually at the corporate office at the Gulf Medical University meeting with the corporate team to discuss strategy plans, budgets, recruitment, and expansion plans for the group.

*What is it like working in a family business environment and what do you consider to be the most challenging aspect about working in a family business today?*

I personally feel that a family business, like any other business, requires hard work, dedication, and perseverance. One of the advantages is having a safety net at your back.



*How has your management philosophy evolved as you have gained more experience?*

Initially, when I joined the business at a very young age, and found myself working with senior doctors and experienced staff members, it was difficult to convince them of the ideas I had. However with time and a few years of experience behind me, the management style has become more authoritative and since we all share the same vision we are able to surge forward towards our common goals. The only philosophy I follow is "work hard and you will succeed."

*What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life?*

The goal of the Thumbay Group is to be the largest healthcare provider in the Middle East. In addition to the planned business growth, I am committed to contributing to uplifting society. One day I would like to reflect on life and know that I have succeeded.

*Would you like to share with us some of your hobbies?*

As of now, work is my hobby. As a father of a new born son, babysitting will be my new hobby.

*What special advice would you give a person entering your field of study?*

Mechanical engineering and healthcare management are two of the most rapidly growing fields of study globally. Both of these fields are very interesting and have tremendous scope on their own.

## "In Love with the Architecture that Shapes Cities" says Alumna Nada Taryam

*You graduated from AUS with a bachelor's in architecture and then pursued a master's at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in the UK. Where does your interest come from in pursuing this particular field of study?*

Prior to pursuing architecture as a career and even before becoming a student of architecture, I found all fields of design inspiring. It was only during my undergraduate years that I learned to love the field of architecture, and as those years progressed I became fonder of it. During my travels I have found myself falling in love with some cities more than others, while some would not even appeal to me. And so I asked myself, what is it about cities that attract people to some more than others? Most obviously would be the city's character, primarily through its architecture. In light of this realization, I became aware that architecture is not merely the profession of designing buildings; there is a deeper significance to it. Architecture shapes cities; it gives meaning and character to them. It is through architecture that you determine how genuine one city is and how lacking another is. All of these underlying complex concepts are what keep me interested in my field and make me eager to learn more.

*What are your immediate plans following your graduate degree?*

My immediate plan has yet to be discovered; however, my long-term plan would be to eventually establish my own practice one day.

*Which experiences at AUS helped you decide to attend graduate school?*

My whole learning experience at AUS made me strive for more knowledge and seek it, even after earning my bachelor's degree.

*What are some of your best memories of your years at AUS?*

Studio days were the most memorable days, particularly during our final year before graduating. We had all known each other for five years by then, and we considered University our second home, if not our first. This was because typically we spent more time in the Architecture and Design building than our own homes.

*You were involved in several internships while at AUS. How do you think they helped you in maintaining your career path? Were they relevant to your decision to pursue graduate studies?*

Well, internships were part of the requirements for our program. Some were more helpful than others but there is no doubt than I did learn from these experiences, whether it was directly related to my field of study or to the broader sense of the profession.



*Would you recommend internships to current AUS students in your field of study? Why?*

Yes certainly, internships do prepare the students for life after graduating and joining the workforce. They give students an idea about what to expect after graduation and this subsequently will help lead them to the path they choose to pursue.

*Do you think it important to get some work experience before pursuing graduate school? Why?*

Yes I believe so, especially since a number of master's degree programs require some work experience before you can actually apply to them. Additionally, working gives you a break from academic life as well, particularly in the case of architecture. Work brings you back to "reality" and helps ground you, which is the opposite of being a student, where you are free from all restrictions and can come up with the most radical designs without being constricted or having any limitations. With that being said, some friends of mine decided to pursue their graduate degrees directly after graduation, and they did absolutely fine. So it really depends on the program one chooses to apply to and what that program requires.

*How do you think your master's degree will prepare you for your future work?*

I think that my master's degree was a completely new page in my academic life. It certainly allowed me to see things differently. It opened my eyes to the endless possibilities in the field of architecture. It made me believe that if one is committed to one's concept anything is possible, with the proper amount of research and commitment.

## Alumna May Barber: Passionate About the Arts

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

I am a Syrian architect, born and raised in the UAE. I studied architecture along with a minor in English Literature at the American University of Sharjah. After graduation, I enrolled in Fashion Design workshops in Esmod Dubai, in addition to Writing About Art with Dubai Culture. Fortunately, my line of work allows me to venture into colorful areas in art and architecture. In my free time, I enjoy reading, writing, music and travelling. I also cherish spending time with my little family, as I am the mother of a one-year old girl, Nai.

*On a typical day in your position at the Office of Sheikha Fatima bint Hazaa' bin Zayed Al Nahyan, what do you do?*

There is no typical day in the office as we are always involved in new projects that vary from academia, to curating exhibitions, conceptual photo shoots, videography projects, organization of workshops and seminars and most recently the art of fashion project. I am fortunate to be working in such a dynamic field where we encounter new ventures and new challenges every day. The experience itself is very vital and indeed very personally rewarding.

*What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?*

The most satisfying part is having the opportunity to work closely with her highness Sheikha Fatima Bint Hazza', who is herself an outstanding leader, a creative artist and prolific intellectual. I also highly enjoy meeting and working with the crème de la crème of intellectuals and professionals in the art and design industries, who continue to enrich my knowledge with their experiences and perceptions. What I find positively challenging the most is the perpetual drive to continuously evolve and respond to the lofty environment of creative minds and skills. In my job, keeping up the momentum, improvising and responding to last minute changes are very critical.

*Since you graduated in 2008 from the AUS College of Architecture, Arts and Design with a major in Architecture, how did your career develop?*

I started my career working in coordination with the American University in Dubai followed by joining the Office of Sheikha Fatima bint Hazaa' bin Zayed Al Nahyan and undertaking tasks in the creative field. I have, in the meantime, continued to improve my skills through undertaking workshops in Fashion Design with Esmod Dubai and Writing About Art with Dubai Culture and Bidoun Projects. I am also an active member in the arts and culture scene in the UAE and continue to practice architecture through participating in proposals and competitions.

*What were some of your major awards and accomplishments throughout your professional career?*

The Cityscape Young Architect of the Year Award in 2008, which was a phenomenal personal achievement and an accomplishment dear to my heart. Also, the BP Innovative Design Award, and most recently the Luxurious Villa Design Award, which was a competition offered by ELG Group in Abu



Dhabi for the complete architectural design of a complex villa using the Vastu system of building and spiritual energies.

*What artistic aspirations do you have now?*

I do not consider myself an artist, but I am keen on scrutinizing art, appreciating it, and keeping up to date with the latest artistic exhibitions and events that I find interesting. I aspire to start my Master's degree either in the History of Art or in Islamic/Middle Eastern Studies as both areas are very interesting to me and most of my recent readings have revolved around these two subjects.

*As an architect, what did you learn from the themes of Sheikha Fatima bint Hazza' bin Zayed Al Nahyan's recent exhibition 'The Black Garment: An Oriental Story'?*

I learnt many things and admired the works for several reasons. First is obviously the aesthetics as the work was visually imposing with beauty and adornment. Another element is the impressive scale, which was very challenging to work with. And finally the technique, since photograms often delivers unpredictable results which are challenging and exciting at the same time. In general, the work was very rich and deliberate and was praised for its versatility, intricacy, and depth.

*What can you tell us about the art scene in the UAE?*

It is dynamic and increasingly growing. There has been a great focus on Islamic and "Middle Eastern" art in the past decade as artists from the region continue to participate in international biennials and major fairs. Therefore the regional "voice" in art is much more prominent and the UAE is an exciting environment for this dynamism. But I still feel that there is a gap between art in its physical space and the masses, as we seem to witness the same crowd responding to the key art-celebrating events. We need to somehow integrate art into the ideology and perhaps education of this generation more profoundly and perhaps make art spaces more inviting and a little less intimidating for those who are interested in art but fear they are not adept at it or practitioners of it.

## Senior Airbus Official Shares His Perspective on International Career Advancement with AUS Students



*Christopher Emerson, Senior Vice President, Future Programs and Market Strategy at Airbus, presented a talk to students at AUS at the main building on November 5, entitled "Your Future by Airbus – An International Career Advancement Perspective" during which he highlighted the various challenges faced by the industry.*

During his discussion, he pointed out o AUS students that in the wake of the growing global talent shortage in the aviation industry and the need to devise smarter and greener skies and industry, Airbus has launched an education and community initiative with the overall goal of inspiring new talent to consider aeronautics and aviation as a career choice.

Emerson also said that in the next 20 years air traffic will double, which will result in 13 trillion passengers per kilometer as opposed to 5 million now. There will be over 28,000 new aircrafts, which will be bigger and more advanced.

"Around six billion people in the world today don't travel regularly. But in the near future, we'll need an infrastructure to support over seven billion people who will travel," Emerson told the large number of students, faculty, and senior AUS officials who attended the lecture.

During the lecture, Emerson provided AUS students with informative and inspirational insight into industry trends that will benefit AUS seniors and recent graduates, who are in the midst of transitioning from academia to the world of employment, by illustrating where the industry is heading by 2050.

The lecture was organized by the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs' Career Services division in collaboration with Airbus, as part of its Career Advancement Executive Lecture Series (CAELS), which aims to introduce AUS graduating seniors and recent alumni to decision makers in different fields.



Part of the audience



Mr. Christopher Emerson addressing the audience

# Alumnus Ahmad Al Areef AlDhaheri, Describes Himself as a Modern Bedouin Artist



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## *Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

My name is Ahmad Saeed AlAreef AlDhaheri, and I am a left-handed Bedouin Emirati artist, born in 1988 behind the orange seas of the Al Ain Oasis and raised between two cities: Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. I recently graduated from AUS with a degree in advertising. My passion for art was expressed at very early stages of my childhood, and I have no boundaries that I limit myself to when considering art.

## *You graduated in 2012 from the AUS College of Arts and Sciences with a major in advertising, what are some of your memories of your undergraduate education?*

AUS was not only a place for academic education, but it also developed my understanding of other cultures. AUS was not my first University; it was the fourth University in which I was enrolled. The reason for this was that I wanted to study something I was interested in, something that I would never regret doing like the arts. My instincts were aimed in the right direction;

AUS was better than what I had imagined. I lived my best moments, made everyone proud, and I fulfilled my first dream, which was graduating from one of the best universities. My memories of my professors in my department, the long conversations with them, and their daily encouragement made me who I am today, and these are memories I will never forget as long as I live.

## *Do you have any plans for any future exhibitions of your work?*

Art is an expression! it is a timeless, unbound, abstract, objective and/or subjective way of turning feelings into visuals. That is the ideology I will continue to abide by with all my artistic 'expressions' to come. When asked about the future, dreaming big or small is really what sets your limits. Dreams aren't planned, neither is the future, we must plan to believe, and I believe our era needs another Mona Lisa to admire, but this time it will be from Abu Dhabi to the world.

## *What were some of your major awards and accomplishments throughout your career?*

Recently, I was selected among this year's winners of the emerging Emirati artists and designers in the Abu Dhabi Art Wings Project competition organized by the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority and sponsored by Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank. I was required to present myself as an artist to the public through social networks and websites during the days of the fair.

## *What artistic aspirations do you have now?*

Living most of my life between Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Al Ain, my unique way of approaching art comes from a place of tradition and heritage as well as contemporary notions. This balance of the old and new, the past and the present, is part of my way of living and I tend to blend these two elements in everything I do and in the way I live.

Pushing my artistic achievements to new heights is something I continuously strive for and I see no boundaries limiting my potential. I also believe in God as the best creator and that imagination/creativity is a rare gift to humankind, one that must always be nurtured and considered once identified in order for it to evolve.

To illustrate my typical inspirational thought process, I was asked to come up with the Abu Dhabi Art 'wing' logo for the Abu Dhabi Art Wings Project competition. Once I knew about the competition, it did not leave my mind.



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I would think of it every time I took a picture, sketched, or painted. Over time I made it my baby by basically personifying it. I kept the thought of it at the back of my head and never stopped sketching and drawing. A mythical creature (Lady Lioness) which I frequently draw inspired me the most. The 'Wing' happens to shape the forehead of a lady like the beginning of her hair if the logo was turned 90 degrees anti-clockwise. You know that electrifying shocking feeling when you envision it all in your head, I had one of those moments. I blended it with my admiration for the golden Bedouin culture, added gold piece to the wing and started experimenting. That was how I was able to simplify the sophisticated drawings of a Lady Lioness to fit as an element that could represent my beloved city of Abu Dhabi.

## *What can you tell us about the art scene in the UAE?*

I truly believe that art is now appreciated more than ten years ago, not only by Emiratis but also by other Gulf countries as well. The diversification of any society is

essential for well-equipped future generations, ready to face other fully developed societies around the world. The immense support of art from our leaders is enough to make us understand that it is a new route for use to consider.

## *What helpful suggestions would you give students who choose the arts as their career?*

Artists are not ordinary and don't blend in the crowd. Anyone can be creative in his or her own career, but the guts you have to be a creative artist is a reward in itself. I don't think it matters what you study as long as you feel the arts in you. Pursuing art as a career won't be an easy job to accomplish; yet, it is not a bad option to choose.

## *Get Connected/Featured Works*

*Tumblr:* <http://ahmadalareef.tumblr.com/>

*Twitter/Instagram Accounts:* @AHMADALAREEF

# AUS Holds Alumni Iftar in Memory of the Late Dr. Ibrahim El Sadek



Members of El Sadek family with Chancellor Peter Heath and Vice Chancellor Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah along with H.E. Eng. Salah Salem Al Shamsi, representatives from Sharjah Islamic Bank and KAF

The American University of Sharjah Alumni Association (AUSAA) held its annual AUS Alumni Sharjah Iftar on August 6, 2012 at the AUS Main Building. The event this year was held in memory of the late Dr. Ibrahim El Sadek, Professor of Mathematics and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Speaking at the event, AUS Chancellor Dr. Peter Heath, expressed his happiness at seeing so many of the alumni journey back to "their academic home," in busy family times like Ramadan. He said it was perhaps the best way to commemorate Dr. El Sadek's passing by pausing to reflect on why the AUS community will miss him so much.

"Dr. El Sadek was one of the AUS pioneer faculty members; he joined the University when it was founded in 1997. More importantly, Dr. El Sadek lived and breathed the AUS vision of creating a University that would provide first-rate education for the youth of the UAE and the Gulf. Because he believed so strongly in this vision, he made sure that his own contributions to the University had great impact," remarked Dr. Heath.

"Dr. El Sadek was a man of quiet intelligence, constant good humor, integrity, and honesty. He represented the ideal of the devoted and caring teacher - someone who works each day to ensure that his students understand and enjoy the intricacies of the math courses he teaches. Ibrahim was a committed researcher, but teaching was his passion," added the chancellor.

Chancellor Heath extended his gratitude and appreciation to Sharjah Islamic Bank for its generosity in sponsoring the well-attended Iftar which brought 500

AUS alumni back to the main campus. "Sharjah Islamic Bank has been a particularly distinguished corporate partner of the American University of Sharjah, a partnership AUS is especially proud of," he said.

Dr. Heath also thanked KAF for their generous support as part of the 'AUS Business Network' in contributing a US\$10,000 scholarship to the AUS Alumni Scholarship Fund.

Welcoming the alumni back to AUS, Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, said, "Although the holy month is a particularly busy time for family and friends, the sheer number of returning graduates in memory of the late Dr. Ibrahim El Sadek at this special Iftar testifies to the very dear place Dr. El Sadek holds in their hearts and that AUS is part of their wider family."

"Dr. El Sadek was a treasured mentor to the AUS community and a cherished professor who many of us have worked with since 1997 when he came to AUS as a pioneer faculty," said Dr. Mourtada-Sabbah. "He came to epitomize the educational mission of AUS, in having you, our young alumni, join the ranks of the educated, well equipped in skilled ways of visualizing the world."

On behalf of the alumni, AUSAA President Ahmed Al Jbori announced the Dr. Ibrahim El Sadek Alumni Scholarship Fund that has been set up in order to commemorate Dr. El Sadek's unwavering devotion to education. The earnings of the Dr. Ibrahim El Sadek Alumni Scholarship Fund will be kept by the University as an endowment fund (waqf) and will also be matched by the University so that the impact of the scholarship



Chancellor Peter Heath presents a token of appreciation to Mr. Mohammed Youssef, Head of Government Business Department at Sharjah Islamic Bank, in the presence of Vice Chancellor Mourtada



Chancellor Peter Heath presents a token of appreciation to Mr. Nour Foudeh, Business Development Manager at KAF, in the presence of Vice Chancellor Mourtada

is magnified and the amount allocated to its awardees is doubled.

Throughout his career, Dr. El Sadek helped many students find their educational niche. "In this way, the values that he dedicated his life to will continue under his name at AUS," said Al Jbori.

"We hope that you will join us in contributing whatever amount you think appropriate to this very worthwhile scholarship endowment fund in Dr. El Sadek's name so

that AUS's world-renowned education may be made available to talented and deserving students and alumni as Professor El Sadek would have wished for them," stated Al Jbori.

Also present at the Iftar were Mohammed Youssef, a representative of Sharjah Islamic Bank; Nour Foudeh, a representative of KAF; and other senior AUS officials. Members from Dr. El Sadek's family were also present at the event.



Alumni at the Iftar in memory of Dr. Ibrahim El Sadek

# Newly Elected AUSAA Council Members Assemble First Convocation



Chancellor Peter Heath and Vice Chancellor Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah along with the AUSAA Board officers

The newly elected AUS Alumni Association (AUSAA) Council held its first get together this week with newly elected members flying in from across the world to meet at AUS. The convocation was attended by 54 Council members, Chancellor Peter Heath, Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, and the AUSAA Board representatives.

The AUSAA concluded successful elections for its Council on October 30, 2012 whereby 75 alumni volunteers were voted in by the 7700 AUS alumni to represent the various geographical chapters of the Alumni Association, as well as each class from the colleges and schools corresponding to every year of graduation.

In congratulating the new Council members on their election to this august representative body, Chancellor Heath expressed his confidence "that members of the newly elected Alumni Association Council will continue to endeavor to take the name of their alma mater far and wide, and that they will use their elected term within AUSAA for the betterment of society." Chancellor Heath commended the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs team, led by Vice Chancellor Mourtada-Sabbah, for the considerable efforts invested and the great strides made in a short

amount of time in providing meaningful opportunities for AUS alumni to connect and network in such a way that the AUSAA has become the flagship role model in the region.

Dr. Mourtada-Sabbah congratulated the newly elected Council members and wished them success in fulfilling their responsibilities to take the AUSAA to greater heights of achievement. "The Alumni Association boasts men and women of unbridled vision, dynamism, dedication, and talent. You are men and women of determination and action who can rise to any challenge. As the leaders of the Association, you and your members have already raised the AUS flag from many mountains and are ready to plant the flag high in new terrain this year and in many years to come," Dr. Mourtada-Sabbah said.

She remarked that alumni ambassadors across the world already count among their members heads of diplomatic missions, first secretaries of embassies, commercial attaches to international trade delegations, doctorates in many academic fields, acclaimed artists, executives that have already ascended the career ladder into board rooms, recipients of prestigious awards in industry and in academic disciplines, and the "movers and shakers"

of their respective communities radiating out to the four corners of the world. "In short, the AUS Alumni Association knows how to get the job done and has demonstrated success many times over," she commented.

AUSAA President Ahmed Al Jbori thanked his fellow Council members for taking time from their busy schedules and flying in from around the world to attend the AUSAA Council convocation. "Our vision for the next two years is to engage every single alumnus and alumna with the Association as the AUSAA should be the alumni's network for life," stated Al Jbori.

He also announced the forthcoming leadership training workshop which will be provided to alumni leaders on the AUSAA Council by the Protocol School of Washington. The workshop will provide training in protocol, cross cultural communication, and diplomacy guidance to all members-elect. The gathering served as an occasion for the newly elected Council members to meet and interact with one another and discuss future strategic plans for each respective chapter/class or constituency and the AUS Alumni Association as a whole.

The meeting marked the official launch of both Simplicity, the new career development platform being made available to AUS alumni to assist in their search for employment and internships opportunities and Encompass, the new alumni networking portal. The showcasing of these new social networking platforms educated Council members on the systems' functions in addition to encouraging them to promote their use among other fellow alumni.



AUSAA President Ahmed Al Jbori welcoming members of the Council



Members of the AUSAA Council flipping through the pages of AUS Connect



# Alumnus Ahmed Khadier Earns a Master's Degree from Harvard and Teaches at AUS

Ahmed Khadier is an architect and urban designer of Palestinian origin who grew up in the UAE. After graduating with honors from the American University of Sharjah in 2002, Khadier went on to continue his studies at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design earning a Master of Architecture in Urban Design in 2005.

While at Harvard, Ahmed participated in the production of several publications including a book entitled "Bringing the Harvard Yards to the River" with Professor Juan Busquets that studied the possibility of the campus's expansion towards the Charles River. He also worked with Professor Hashim Sarkis, the Aga Khan Professor of Landscape and Urbanism in Muslim Societies, on the redesign of Serkeci Square in Istanbul in a studio entitled "Intermodal Istanbul."

In 2010, Ahmed was invited to teach at AUS becoming the first graduate of the architecture program to participate in the Architecture Studio Curriculum. He continues to be a recurring critic and lecturer at the School in both the Architecture and Urban Planning programs. His research and academic interests focus on urban mapping, Middle Eastern urbanism, and issues of housing within Middle Eastern societies. His first public lecture at the UAE Society of Engineers tackled the issue of Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank, which was the subject of his undergraduate thesis project at AUS. He continues to speak and raise awareness on the matter.

*How did you first become interested in architecture? Has it always been a passion for you?*

I wouldn't say it was always a passion. My interest in architecture was something that evolved with time. I had always shown interest in drawing since an early age and my parents always encouraged that, but I think true interest in architecture as a discipline started during my years at AUS.



*How did your academic experience at AUS prepare you for Harvard?*

I had great teachers at AUS. They were always encouraging and supportive in every way. Despite the relative newness of the program at the time, the learning experience and overall environment were quite rewarding and prepared me well for taking on future endeavors.

*How did you find teaching at AUS, the same University you graduated from?*

It was a great experience. I enjoyed it tremendously. Teaching allowed me to learn a great deal about myself and to develop as a designer. It was a great privilege to have taught next to some of my former professors.

*You have worked both as a professional architect and a teacher, which do you find more satisfying? And why?*

I think it is important to maintain exposure to both sides of the profession, the academic and the practical. This is particularly the case with architecture as a profession in which one mode is constantly informing the other. I would say the ideal situation would be to be able to practice and teach alongside.

*What specific goals, including those related to your profession, have you established for your life?*

Well, I guess goals and aspirations constantly evolve. So there are no specific goals as such, but I would say that as an architect, one always aspires to build critical work and contribute positively to the profession. On a more personal level, I would like to develop as an educator and a practitioner with a critical body of academic and professional work.

*Your project on Israeli settlements in the West Bank sounds extremely timely and important, can you tell us how that came about? What are your plans to continue that project?*

It was somewhat coincidental actually. It started as an investigation for a site for my graduation project and evolved into a mapping project of the West Bank region. This became an ongoing interest of mine. I continue to do research and participate in discussions about the topic. Perhaps it will culminate with a book one day.

# An Ambassador of Protocol and Etiquette in the UAE, Alumnus Saeed Al-Salkhadi

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

My name is Saeed Al-Salkhadi, I was born in Abu Dhabi. I received my B.Sc. in electrical engineering from the University of Sharjah; my M.Sc. in engineering system management (ESM) from the American University of Sharjah; and my MBA in international marketing from the American University in Dubai. I have worked in both the government and private sectors, and I recently joined the Protocol School of Washington as the managing director for the Regional Office in the Gulf and Middle East.

*On a typical day in your position at the Protocol School of Washington, (PSOW), a leader in protocol and etiquette training in the US with an office in the UAE, what do you do?*

First, I prepare my to-do list, respond to new emails, update my weekly tasks, and then I leave to attend the scheduled meetings for the day. During the day, I make sure to read the daily newspaper and capture any relative information. Before the end of the business day, I try to log in tasks for the next day.

*How did studying at AUS help prepare you to be successful in this profession?*

Studying at AUS was such a great experience. The high educational standards, the subject-matter, expert faculty members, the emphasis on team work among students, and the up-to-date interaction with industries and the outside world, are just a few examples of how AUS equips students for a career in life.

*The UAE hosts so many special events, from internationally-attended sporting events to presidential visits, so the need to understand and work with other cultures has also grown. What is the importance of promoting protocol-related education in the UAE?*

The UAE is a regional hub for business and tourism. There are 200 nationalities living within and visiting the country. Protocol principles provide internationally-accepted standards of interacting with people both professionally and socially. Areas such as cross-cultural communication, business image, customer excellence, corporate entertaining, and personal leadership are important to individuals and organizations who desire a high level of business intelligence.

*How do you see the Gulf region evolving through etiquette and protocol training to serve as strategic assets for business organizations?*

Similar to the UAE, the Gulf region's culture is known for its hospitality and graciousness. The people in the Gulf strive for excellence and distinction; and the protocol and business etiquette training provides the right platform to gain such skills.



*What makes the Protocol School of Washington different from other institutions?*

The Protocol School of Washington is the first and only school of its kind accredited by the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET), which is officially recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. In 2013, the Protocol School of Washington will celebrate its 25th anniversary commemorating more than two decades as the global leader in business etiquette, image, and international protocol training. The Protocol School of Washington is recognized worldwide as the most trusted name in the industry and has trained more than 4,000 men and women from 59 countries.

*From what you have been able to observe in the UAE job market, what advice would you give new AUS graduates who are in the process of finding their first positions or are just beginning their careers?*

My advice to the new AUS graduates is to try to develop their interpersonal skills before they start applying for a job. It is acknowledged that hiring decisions are based on 80% of the candidate's interpersonal skills, and only 20% on his/her technical skills. Topics such as communication skills, body language, presentation skills, and professional image, are of great importance to employers.

## TEDxSharjah Organized by AUS Alumna Wafa Khalfan



Alumna Wafa Khalfan

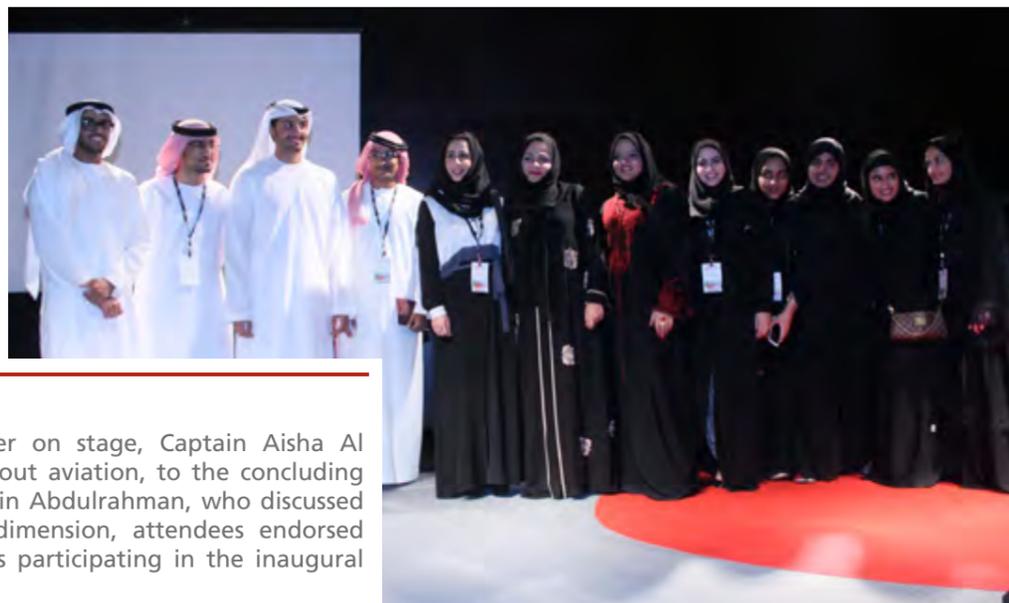
From the first speaker on stage, Captain Aisha Al Hamili, who spoke about aviation, to the concluding presentation with Kevin Abdulrahman, who discussed failure from a new dimension, attendees endorsed the lineup of speakers participating in the inaugural TEDxSharjah event.

H.E. Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qassimi, Chairperson of the Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq), and H.E. Michael Corbin, the United States Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, were among the audience at TEDxSharjah. A group of hearing-impaired individuals also enjoyed TEDxSharjah speeches, as the event provided instant American Sign Language and Emirati Sign Language interpretation.

"After nine months of working on this event, we were amazed to see how people expressed their feedback on social media about how this event inspired them and introduced new ideas," said Wafa Khalfan, TEDxSharjah curator and AUS alumna. Three AUS alumni were among the speakers: Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani, Sheikh Salem Al Qassimi, and Najla Al Ansari. The LEAF Awards 2012 winning venue, Al Qasba theatre, embraced TEDxSharjah's thirteen speakers who employed the theme "A New Dimension," in addition to a Karate performance by Shotokan Center, and live acappella singing by SAMA Quartet. Shedding light on media effects on parenthood and time spent with family, Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani's new dimension was about climbing mountains and what one can learn from that experience.

Female TEDxSharjah speakers focused on the effects of culture on their careers as women. Najla Al Ansari's speech was built around the beauty and spa business and her innovative ideas regarding this growing industry.

Mapping collaborative networks through the ADAM project was Sheikh Salem Al Qassimi's initiative, which



AUS alumni and students participating in TEDxSharjah

he explained thoroughly using maps and videos. The event concluded; however, the vibe regarding it is still ongoing in the social media.

In the spirit of ideas worth spreading, TEDx is a program of local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. At a TEDx event, TEDTalks video and live speakers combine to spark deep discussions and connections in a small group. These local, self-organized events are branded TEDx, where x = an independently organized TED event. The TED Conference provides general guidance for the TEDx program, but individual TEDx events are self-organized.

TED is a nonprofit organization devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading, which started out as a four-day conference in California 26 years ago. TED has grown to support various world-changing ideas with multiple initiatives. TED has established the annual TED Prize, where exceptional individuals with a wish to change the world are given the opportunity to put their wishes into action; TEDx, which offers individuals or groups a way to host local, self-organized events around the world; and the TED Fellows program, helping world-changing innovators from around the globe to become part of the TED community and, with its help, amplify the impact of their remarkable projects and activities.

For information about TED's upcoming conferences, visit <http://www.ted.com/registration>

Follow TED on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/TEDTalks>, or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/TED>

## Alumnus Rami Hamadeh's PhD to Focus on the World's Need for Transparent and Consistent Dialogue

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

My name is Rami Hamadeh. I graduated from AUS in 2007 with a BA in mass communication and a minor in international studies.

*In looking back to your upbringing and education, who or what influenced you to study mass communication?*

My father has always inspired me to set high goals for myself, as he himself holds a PhD in analytical chemistry, and I always follow whatever I'm passionate about. It wasn't until 9/11 occurred that I realized there's a need for dialogue between the East and West. Being raised in and understanding both the American and Arab culture, I decided to use this to my advantage in bridging the gap between the two. That is how I found mass communication as the best medium to do so.

*You are planning to pursue your PhD soon in the United States. What is the program you plan to study and did your AUS education help you in choosing to pursue a graduate degree? Why or why not?*

I plan on studying Near and Middle Eastern Studies this fall, at Rice University. AUS helped me in choosing to pursue a graduate degree as key relationships were cultivated and dialogues shared during my four years at the University. Some of the professors, especially those with whom I studied international relations courses, played an authoritative role, not only in the inspiration I received, but also the molding of my mental faculties towards liking and taking an interest in this subject. Some of the rigorous practices taught in developing and continually editing research also helped prepare me for what lies ahead.

*What do you think will be your greatest challenge(s) as you are working on this degree?*

Perhaps fine-tuning my area of interest down to one specific topic or one single thesis will bring the most challenges. Moreover, finding a sufficient amount of available literature for my research is something that I imagine will pose a challenge for new PhD candidates.

*What extra-curricular activities were you involved with during your years at AUS?*

I was involved with the Office of Student Affairs, specifically in the capacity of residential halls, as I was an RA, resident assistant for my dormitory building. I also participated in recreational sports – basketball and soccer, and various student club organizations – namely the Islamic, Palestinian, and Lebanese cultural clubs.

*Are you currently employed? And if yes, what type of work do you do? What is a typical day like for you?*

I am not currently employed. My most recent post was as a team lead/sales and service specialist for Aon Hewitt. I was responsible for the front line customer service delivery to clients and retirees in the medicare market, including



improvement initiatives to work performance process tools and quality assurance plans. A typical day consisted of managing an 11-member team, directing operational metrics, and ensuring that our department met quality standards and regulatory compliance, as well as all service level agreements.

*What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life?*

Given today's unpredictable and tumultuous market, professionals need to stay sharp day in and day out. So I've established a personal goal of working hard and smart through arduous times, making sure to treat each day as a first interview, marketing myself in the best light possible. I aim at consistently refining and developing my transferable skills, to show potential employers I'm ready and willing to learn the ropes in any industry. I think about how I can add value, irrespective of the functional role I am in. Most importantly, I stay persistent and positive.

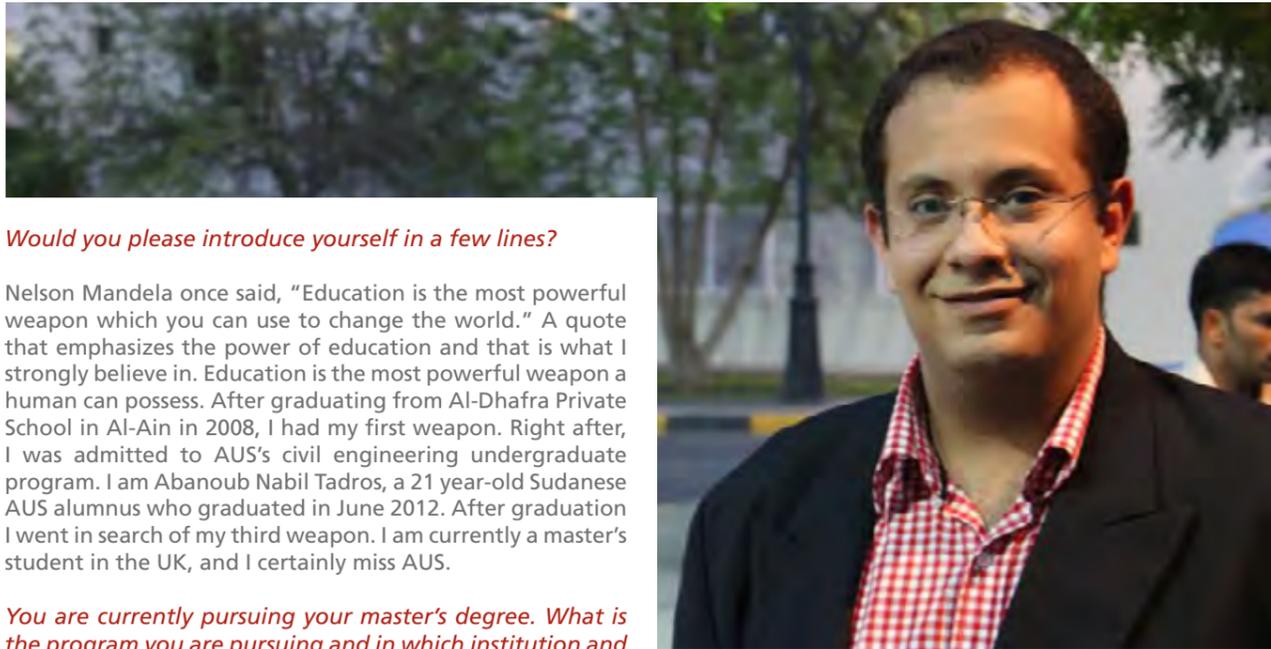
*What do you plan to do after completing your PhD degree?*

Hopefully, my contribution will be in the context of academia, whether it's serving in a post as a history advisor in a 'think tank,' in the United Nations, or as a professor engaging students in circles of dialogue with far-sightedness and critical thinking.

*What advice would you give to graduating students currently looking for work?*

Focus on developing and marketing your transferable skills. Show employers that you're ready and willing to learn the ropes in any industry. Think about how you can add value, irrespective of the functional role you are in. Most importantly, be persistent and positive.

## Alumnus Abanoub Tadros's Role Model: Nelson Mandela



*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." A quote that emphasizes the power of education and that is what I strongly believe in. Education is the most powerful weapon a human can possess. After graduating from Al-Dhafra Private School in Al-Ain in 2008, I had my first weapon. Right after, I was admitted to AUS's civil engineering undergraduate program. I am Abanoub Nabil Tadros, a 21 year-old Sudanese AUS alumnus who graduated in June 2012. After graduation I went in search of my third weapon. I am currently a master's student in the UK, and I certainly miss AUS.

*You are currently pursuing your master's degree. What is the program you are pursuing and in which institution and how is that different from your AUS education?*

I am currently doing a master's degree in engineering project management at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. It was during my last year at AUS that I planned to do further studies. With financial and emotional help from my parents; my dream came true. AUS is definitely an excellent University of highly qualified staff, and being an alumnus is really a privilege. Students here in the UK are always under pressure, but this is not a new thing to me. Earning a bachelor's degree from AUS was not easy, and it was extremely demanding. However it was that kind of high academic level that made studying in Leeds not very different than AUS.

*Did your AUS education help you in choosing to pursue a graduate degree? Why or why not?*

Yes, at AUS, nearly all the professors have their masters and doctorate degrees from the US and UK and looking at them is what motivated me. Moreover, the excellent reputation of AUS globally also helped me in pursuing my dream of further education.

*What is the greatest challenge(s) you are facing as you are working on this degree?*

Frankly speaking, the high level and standards of an AUS education made the transformation from the bachelor's level to the master's level easy. This was what I told Chancellor Peter Heath and Dr. Nada Mourtada during the AUS UK Alumni Chapter inauguration recently. At AUS we always had lots of things to do from quizzes to projects and midterms and lots of other activities. Although it's a different system here in Leeds, when I look back it is still AUS, but in a different country. Therefore, THANK YOU AUS!

*Are you currently employed? And if yes, what type of work do you do? What is a typical day like for you?*

I am not currently employed. I am doing a full time master's degree and I definitely need all the time I currently have to earn a high degree in this program. A typical day would be attending classes, communicating with friends and then with family through the Internet, and obviously studying and following up on assignments.

*What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life?*

One of my main goals in life is to reach a high academic level and benefit my country and the community through my education.

*What are you planning to do after completing your master's degree?*

Firstly and most importantly, I look forward to returning to the United Arab Emirates (my second home) and staying with my family. For the time being, I will be looking forward to working using my two degrees and benefitting from real life work experience.

*Are there any comments that you would like to share with the readers?*

I would like to thank my family for all their sacrifices and support, which I will never forget. Special thanks to the entire AUS community for all they gave me and thanks for their never ending support. Also, I hope that all undergraduate readers will come to appreciate AUS more and value it. To all of you current students, you will certainly miss AUS and you will appreciate it more the moment you graduate.

## Alumna Hasnaa Rabbat Pursues Her Master's at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

My name is Hasnaa Rabbat. I was born and raised in Damascus, Syria. In 2007, after graduating from high school, I joined AUS and graduated with a BSc in electrical engineering in 2011. I am currently pursuing my master's.

*In looking back to your upbringing and education, who or what influenced you to study engineering?*

Throughout high school, mathematics was definitely among my favorite subjects, but I was never too sure of what to pursue at University. As I was applying to AUS, I knew I would never be a lawyer, a doctor, or an electrical/computer engineer. So, I randomly ticked the box that indicated chemical engineering on the application. When I started the NGN 110 course that basically introduces you to various engineering majors, I honestly saw no point in taking the course. However, as I progressed through the course, I realized that although I really enjoyed chemistry, chemical engineering was not for me. Furthermore, as Mr. Ibrahim Abu Seif, Lab Instructor at the College of Engineering, introduced the section of the course on electrical engineering and particularly communications, I learnt better than to use the word 'never'. I started my second semester by transferring to electrical engineering, and I am now doing my master's in communication.

*Did your AUS education help you in choosing to pursue a graduate degree? Why or why not?*

I have always wanted to pursue a graduate degree, but I never really knew how far down that road I wanted to go. When I started my master's degree though, I got the chance to listen to employees in various leading companies and as they shared their experiences with us and discussed the types of work they do everyday, I felt I was more suited to beginning my career after completing my degree rather than pursuing a PhD.

*You are pursuing your master's degree at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. What is the program and how is it different from your AUS education?*

I am pursuing a master's in electrical engineering with a major in communications and a minor in signal processing. As both AUS and Michigan follow an American system, the way we progress through the courses is very similar. However, the difficulty of courses between a graduate program and an undergraduate program is pretty noticeable.

*What is the greatest challenge(s) you are facing as you are working on this degree?*

The greatest challenge I am facing is the difficulty and amount of extra work that needs to be done per course.



*Are you currently employed? And if yes, what type of work do you do? What is a typical day like for you?*

I have a part-time tutoring job on campus. I am also one of the co-founders of Jusoor, a Syrian NGO that aims to improve the economic and educational situation in Syria. A typical day would be classes in the morning, studying, and then some tutoring and Jusoor work. In graduate school, you usually leave fun for the weekend.

*What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life? What are you planning to do after completing your master's degree?*

I consider myself fortunate to have studied at AUS and to currently be studying at the University of Michigan. Not only am I earning academic degrees, I am also being exposed to many different cultures, mindsets, and opinions and I hope I spend the rest of my life doing so. Steve Jobs urged the students at Stanford University, during their commencement ceremony, to continuously strive to seek knowledge and challenge themselves throughout their lives, he told them to "Stay hungry, stay foolish." Part of my strategy is to do just that, stay 'hungry' and 'foolish.' I plan to work at several leading companies in my field of study, hopefully in countries across the world, and gather as much experience as I possibly can. Eventually, I hope one day be able to move back to Syria to utilize my knowledge in rebuilding the country and to share all that I have learnt.

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## COINS Chairman Larry Sullivan Addresses AUS Students on “Entrepreneurship as a Force for Good”

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Mr. Mohamed Yassine Otmani presents a token of appreciation to Mr. Larry Sullivan

40 Larry Sullivan, Founder and President of the COINS Foundation (Construction Industry Solutions) a global company headquartered in the UK, delivered a lecture to AUS students as part of his drive to engage business students in principles of business and entrepreneurship as a force for good. The lecture was held on November 27, at AUS campus.

Mr. Sullivan gave a brief overview of his six niche software companies, customers, and offices around the world. He then spoke of building social value into his corporate strategies and stressed the importance of leading by example.

“You need to help establish social and economic independence and influence the way the next generation thinks about poverty, disability, and injustice,” remarked Mr. Sullivan.

The COINS Foundation aims to support projects which address local issues in a sustainable way. It seeks to build communities where no member is excluded or disenfranchised by virtue of their health, physical impairment, education, or poverty. These will be communities which recognize the right of all members to receive equal opportunities, where those with strength support the weaker to be strong, where the wealthy support the poorer to prosper, and where the wise support the uneducated to learn.

“Put simply, the COINS Foundation builds anything - schools, hospitals, and homes. But we also build skills, confidence, and prosperity, because we know that the best approach to supporting communities is to move toward the ultimate goal of sustainability,” stated Mr. Sullivan.

During his talk, Mr. Sullivan discussed the importance of various principles, processes, and techniques that he has used as part of starting and establishing businesses around the world. He also explained how the principles of corporate social responsibility should be interwoven into the fabric of a company. He used the examples of the COINS Foundation, the COINS Challenge events, and social enterprises such as the Stepping Stones Schools and the Stepping Stones Schools Cookie Bar.

Whilst explaining the Cookie Bar, a venture managed and operated by children of the Stepping Stones School that has its profits re-invested in the school and the COINS Foundation, Mr. Sullivan highlighted its core purpose. “The aim of a social enterprise such as the Cookie Bar is to enable children to become social and economic contributors,” he said.

Mohamed Yassine Otmani, Career Services Advancement Manager at the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs and curator of this lecture as part of the “AUS Career Advancement Executive Lecture Series,” pointed out that “COINS is a great example of how societal values should be at the core of business and how the corporate sector can influence social change, leading by example through fundraising and social enterprise, on a global level.”

By speaking at top business schools, Mr. Sullivan aims to influence business students to think differently so that once they become successful entrepreneurs they will act with integrity and responsibility. He has recently spoken on “Entrepreneurship as a Force for Good” at Harvard and at Edinburgh Business School.

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## Alumnus Mohamed Wehbi, Ambassador of the Road Management and Engineering Master’s Program at Birmingham University

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Every boy’s ideal and hero is his father. As I grew up, my childhood was spent watching my father designing buildings and playing with his desk stationery trying to draw engineering plans. And I too wanted to grow up so I could look as sophisticated as him. Since that time I always knew that I would become a civil engineer. And when the time was right, I applied to the American University of Sharjah, and was accepted as an undergraduate in spring 2006 to study civil engineering.

With every assignment, exam, and presentation I made at AUS I acquired new sets of skills that shaped my professional prospects. The faculty in the civil engineering department at AUS played a crucial role in polishing my personality and directing me to where my potential could best be utilized. With the support and care of the department I was exposed to the field of academic research in my senior year at AUS, which normally is considered at a postgraduate level. As a result of that fruitful experience, I decided to pursue my postgraduate studies in the field of transportation and push myself out of my comfort zone to study abroad.

Along with my qualifications, AUS’s faculty recommendations and AUS’s global reputation, I managed to secure seats at various top universities in the United States and the United Kingdom. I chose to attend Birmingham University in the UK to study for a master’s degree in road management and engineering. At that point I was worried and was not sure how my academic background would hold up in the face of an entirely new educational system. However, after arriving in the UK, these worries started to fade away and I realized that AUS had prepared me well in many different aspects, not just in the academic field, but also at the cultural level. Due to the cultural diversity at AUS, the cultural transition that I had to go through in the UK was very smooth. At the academic level, AUS provided me with a firm foundation that enabled me to graduate with distinction in my master’s degree. After that, I was awarded a scholarship to study for my PhD in the field of railways to look at track vibrations and associated structural conditions. The process of critical thinking became more involved at the PhD level and the learning pyramid became entirely self-taught with some guidance from my supervisors.

Along with my responsibilities as a research fellow, I was assigned to be the ambassador of the Master’s Program for Road Management and Engineering.



41 In this capacity I help in maintaining connections between the master’s students and the industry around the globe.

As time goes on, there appear to be more and more crises developing around our world. It has become an important necessity to encourage people to continue with their higher education in order to develop minds that can come up with complete solutions to the problems facing the world. Now that I am halfway through my PhD, my hope is that one day I will be able to come back to the region as a lecturer and a researcher in order to transfer the immense amount of knowledge that I have acquired from my time in the UK to future generations.

# Alumna Samya Ayish, Social Media Producer at CNN

*My name is Samya Ayish, I am a working mother of two lovely boys. I graduated from AUS in 2005, with a degree in multimedia design. Currently I work for CNN as a social media producer.*

*In looking back at your upbringing and education, who or what influenced you to study multimedia design?*

My father, Dr. Mohammad Ayish, who is an AUS professor of mass communication, was a major inspiration in addition to television, they were both great influencers.

*On a typical day in your position at CNN, what do you do?*

I usually spend my day reviewing news, going through twitter hash tags, digging through new Facebook groups and pages, and interacting with the audience who reads CNN Arabic news.

*What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?*

Working for an international brand name such as CNN is both satisfying and rewarding. What is challenging for me is the ability to keep up with news and how fast things happen around us, especially given the fact that social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are important tools in achieving that.

*What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life?*

The most important goal for me both as a mother and an employee is trying to maintain a balance between the two parts of my life. However, the main goal is giving my sons enough time and attention in order to raise them to be good citizens in our society.

*What special advice would you give a person entering your field of study?*

Stay up to date with all the technological advancements happening every day. However, this should not stop you from reading constantly and consistently, because I believe this is the basis for all professions in the world.



*If you had one recommendation to make to your fellow alumni what would it be?*

Do not let your busy life detach you from your old friends and memories.

*Would you like to share with us some of your hobbies?*

I like to spend some of my time reading Arabic stories to my children.

# Alumni Working at AUS

## Ahmad Kaddoura

Government Coordinator  
Office of Public Affairs

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

My name is Ahmad Mohamad Kaddoura, I am a Palestinian with a Lebanese travel document, and a proud father of three girls and a baby boy. I graduated from AUS in 2003 with a BA in public administration with a concentration in human resource management. I also earned my MA in English/Arabic/English translation and interpreting in 2009 from AUS. I was born in Al Ain, and now live in Sharjah, which was my first experience living away from my family and hometown.

*In looking back to your upbringing and education, who or what influenced you to study Public Administration?*

My father is a manager of an insurance company. And when I was in grade three, I was interviewed as part of the summer program in our school and was asked what I would like to be in the future. My answer was, "I want to become a manager." The interviewer asked "Why?" and I answered, "because my father is a manager." Maybe it is the genes that led to that childish answer, but I assure you that once I majored in public administration I realized that I couldn't study something else. In other words, I found "myself."

*On a typical day in your position as the Government Coordinator at the Office of Public Affairs at AUS, what do you do?*

In my current position, I supervise the workflow of government applications for faculty, staff, dependents, and students. In addition, we respond to visa requests from various AUS departments for the purpose of conferences and job interviews. Also, I meet with AUS staff members in addition to parents and answer their queries concerning government related issues. Furthermore I reply to e-mails sent to our department concerning the same issues. I also communicate with government officials to find ways of improving our level of service, share thoughts, and also make sure that the AUS community abides by the rules and regulations of the UAE.

*What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?*

Dealing with people is interesting. The power of words cannot be underestimated. The challenge is that I meet with people from different cultural backgrounds and levels of education. It is very challenging for me to facilitate and ease the transition of a person from his or her own cultural background to the new one. This is quite intense, as changing the way one thinks is never an easy task. All of this must be accomplished smoothly and efficiently.

*How did studying Public Administration help prepare you to being successful in this job?*



I was trained to deal with people, manage them, and lead them. Each level requires a certain set of interpersonal characteristics and skills. The education I received at AUS gave me the guide. Using the proper tools to accomplish tasks is a sign that success will eventually be the result. The team I'm working with always provides a healthy environment. In my field of study, I learned that the service provided by the public sector is very different from the service provided by the private sector, and this is most visible in terms of attitude. AUS gave us the tools to be able to encounter the daily changes, adapt to them, and work through them.

*What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life?*

Climbing the ladder starts from the first step. There is no hurry. The experience I'm earning on a daily basis is of high value in the market. The positive feedback I receive from the different clients and customers I deal with, all point to the fact that I am moving in the right direction.

*What special advice would you give a person entering your field of study?*

Always remember that you are providing a service to others. You have to be psychologically ready for it. Patience and willingness to assist others allows you to be able to create ways to respond to the different needs of the public community.

*What are the top qualities of success that you would advise the students of AUS to cultivate?*

There are a lot of qualities students should cultivate, and I think that "listening" should be the top priority. This is a quality and skill that many lack nowadays. All our problems stem from the fact that we talk more than we listen. Listen to others and more importantly listen to yourself. This will help you grow and improve yourself, which then allows you to help others.

*Would you like to share with us some of your hobbies?*

Swimming is my favorite hobby and it is the only hobby I have time to practice, especially with family. Other hobbies are playing football and horse-back riding.

# Alumna Rawan Aloul on Her Challenging Role as a Computer Engineer



Alumna Rawan Aloul on Her Challenging Role As a Computer Engineer

## Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?

I was born and raised in the UAE; this is home. I graduated from AUS in fall 2006 with a BS degree in computer engineering and minor in engineering management. I joined EMC as an associate project manager and had the opportunity to grow with them and be promoted to a senior project manager. Parallel to my job I'm currently pursuing my MBA at AUD with a concentration in marketing. Being raised in a house full of boys somehow stimulated me to always want to make a difference or stand out, and prove that I was capable. At one point in my life I was playing football with my brothers and their friends; fortunately I was introduced to Barbie and Ken shortly after that. I'm my worst critic. I set goals and challenge myself to reach them. I like to get things done (which sometimes got misinterpreted as being strict). I like doing voluntary work, I enjoy traveling though I dread flying, I like speaking to people in elevators. I have fallen in love twice: the first time with my nephew and the second time with my niece. Despite work and school and my usual commute I am willing to dedicate any spare time to spend with these two. They taught me new forms of love, care, and patience.

*In looking back at your upbringing and education, who or what influenced you to study Computer Engineering?*

As democratic as my family can be, coming from a family of medicine and engineering, there really weren't many choices. Jokes aside, I was always impressed by the title 'engineer,' it sounded very intellectual and well respected to me. I was successful at science and mathematics at school (the teacher's favorite on most occasions) so I guess I was somehow naturally following the path to engineering. While my brother, Professor Fadi Aloul, Associate Professor of Computer Science and Engineering at AUS, wasn't in favor of me studying engineering at first, I have to say he was secretly one of my sources of inspiration. I was impressed by his achievements and seeing him happy and content with what he does stimulated me to want to be like him – Enjoy what I do and be successful at it.

*On a typical day in your position at EMC, what do you do?*

I'm currently looking after projects in Oman, Yemen, and Abu Dhabi. I'm expected to be mobile and frequently at customer sites. Therefore in one day I'll take a morning flight to Oman and return that same afternoon or evening, and the next day I will show up for a 10 AM meeting in Abu Dhabi, which where I travel from is at least a 2 to 3 hour commute.

But this is not always the case. I usually start off my day with my calendar and agenda reviewing the day's booked appointments and last night's notes. I always try to give myself reminders to stay on track or where possible, be ahead of schedule. Colorful "post-it" notes are a very helpful tool.



On any day, there are status reports that need to be sent, internal forecasts that need to be updated, meetings and conference calls to attend to. I am working with either the Support team to follow up on a particular customer's issues, or I am with the Project team to discuss another customer's implementation progress and challenges, or I am with another customer to review a project status and actions, or I am helping to kick-off a new project and get informally introduced, etc. On average, I am managing a number of projects of various scales and with various customers.

*What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?*

There are, in fact, many factors. To begin with, I work with a great team, one that is very diverse but highly competent and collaborative. Having this positive collaboration and support adds great satisfaction to my job. With every new project and the constant technological advancements EMC brings I am learning something new every day and expanding my knowledge-base and skill-set. At the end of the day when I close a project with a happy customer that gives me a sense of achievement.

What is most challenging, on the other hand, is being able to proactively address issues on a project and communication. It's not always easy to identify every potential stumbling block; you are always prone to face issues. Also when working with large teams of people you have to expect that there will always be miscommunication somewhere, whether it is a piece of information not being transferred to the other party or simply something being misinterpreted due to the differences in dialects, language, culture, etc.

*How did studying engineering help prepare you to being successful in this job?*

It provided me with the fundamentals and basic tools and skills that help me in carrying out my job today. It helped me in thinking differently, and in approaching and tackling issues from a broader perspective. It made me a more capable and successful problem solver and a more effective team player.

*What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life?*

I intend to create and maintain a successful track record, create and maintain strong rapport with my workplace, and stay in touch with school mates. I plan to be successful at whatever I do, whether at work, at home, at school, or beyond. I want to be that helping hand and supportive whenever possible and give back to society. I plan to finish my MBA, which I'm halfway through now. I will try to balance between work and my personal life – this is still a work in progress. And finally, I want to learn a third language – at full proficiency!

*In your experience, what are possible challenges for alumnae in the workplace that might be turned into opportunities?*

Challenges could be in any form, whether it's a difficult customer, new technology you're not used to, running late in meeting deadlines on a project, conflict within your project team, or having a non-supporting manager. The point here is to always view any challenge as an opportunity to learn something new, find ways to work around the challenge, take initiatives, gain control over it, and build contingency plans to be proactive. Allow challenges to help you by broadening your thinking and not by limiting or stressing you.

*What special advice would you give a person entering your field of study?*

Engineering courses can be tough, dry, and demanding. I remember on some occasions we used to focus too much on the content and not enough on the context. In other words, we were learning and memorizing bullet points, formulas, and methodologies without actually grasping the objectivity. My advice to you is to try to connect what you study to real world applications, and don't be shy to ask if you don't know the answer. Understanding the relevance of what you are studying and how it helps or impacts today's businesses and industries is important in making you a successful engineer, project manager, consultant, or whatever role you end up doing.

Another key piece of advice is to build a network (a people network and not an IT network), learn the value of networking and learn how to work in teams – this will most certainly help you in your career later on.

Last but not least, don't spend too much time in senior design labs; it can become an obsession. Engage in student activities and join student clubs. Move around, socialize, and have fun while you can.

*What are the top qualities of success that you would advise the alumnae and women students of AUS to cultivate?*

Perseverance, maintaining a positive attitude all the time, being focused and making goal-oriented decisions and actions, will all help lead you to success.

## Alumnus Syed Ahmed Wins ITU Telecom World 2012 Young Innovators Competition

*First of all, congratulations on the prestigious award you recently attained. Can you please introduce yourself?*

My name is Syed Ahmed, I am the co-founder and CTO of Gradberry.com and a recent Distinction Graduate of the Masters of Engineering Management program at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Australia. I proudly graduated from AUS in 2011 as a mechanical engineer and was the president of the Power Hit Radio Club for two years. I also had the privilege of working in the ODAA and with AUS Student Activities and Student Affairs during the course of my studies.

*What are the challenges that you face as an emerging entrepreneur in Dubai and what makes you stand out?*

As an emerging entrepreneur one of the toughest challenges was pushing the limits of learning something that was completely out of my field of study (i.e. coding and web development to create the platform) and deviating from the norms of what typical businesses usually do. The second toughest challenge is always how can I start my business with the least amount of money. I created Gradberry with a budget of \$ 200 and continue to work on concept businesses that are created from zero dollars.

What makes me stand out is that I'm passionate about what I do and most of all enjoy being an entrepreneur. I've learnt to handle both the business and technical side of businesses, which puts me in a position where I can not only create but execute ideas effectively. I also strongly believe that purpose proceeds profit.

*How was the idea born and how did Gradberry make its way to the Young Innovators Competition?*

Like every great idea ours has a story. The journey began after my graduation in 2011 as a mechanical engineer and I started job hunting in Dubai. I filled out around 220 job applications in the next six months but was never able to secure a job in the field of engineering. Why? Because Dubai has a select few engineering firms, the construction industry, which was the largest provider of engineering jobs, disappeared right after the recession. Companies in the Middle East didn't know how to connect with the students and the current job sites didn't really cater to young graduates. It didn't stop there, because I wasn't the only person who couldn't find a job, there were thousands of us.

In June 2011 my co-founder and I came up with the idea of Gradberry, which was a careers portal that specifically caters to students and graduates. The idea came about after both of us had seen and experienced how unemployment in the Middle East was causing an uproar. The current platforms were too frustrating to



Alumnus Syed Ahmed receiving the award from Dr. Hamadoun Toure, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

use and didn't provide any jobs at all for fresh graduates. Both of us had been down the same road and we knew that it was time that we tried to make a change.

I had zero experience in coding or design; I was a mechanical engineer. Determined to launch the idea, I spent three months learning Photoshop, PHP, CSS, and HTML coding on my own and designed the first version of the site for launch in late October 2011. From that point, a year down the line, we applied to ITU Young Innovators so that we could voice our concerns for global youth unemployment. With their help we were able to expand our platform to connect and convince more employers to take on students and graduates, so that they can be learn and possibly make a change just like we did.

*Tell us a little about the competition and the innovative idea you presented.*

The ITU Young Innovators competition brings together 12 of the brightest social entrepreneurs and innovators between the ages of 18-25, who are addressing real world issues with their businesses every year. The aim of the competition is to provide the founders of the businesses or projects mentorship, support, and funding.

Since Gradberry is the Middle East's first careers portal and we're trying to address the problem of youth unemployment in the Middle East region, being the founder and creator of the web platform, I had the honor of presenting and pitching Gradberry to industry and world leaders during the ITU conference held in October 2012. I was also asked to speak at the world leaders debate at the conference where I brought up several challenges that youth face in today's world in terms of unemployment, information transparency, and investment.

*What award did you receive and how do you feel about it?*

I was given the award for Young Innovator 2012 from the UN's ITU as well as support from the ITU in terms of mentorship and funding. I was ecstatic about winning the award and was honored to have been given a chance to represent my business at such a prestigious conference.

*What did you learn from this competition?*

I took a lot home with me besides the award at the ITU competition. I made a lot of friends, connections, and learnt that ideas don't cost money but just take time and devotion. We received mentorship from some of the

best tech entrepreneurs from around the world, which furthered our knowledge of business development and business execution.

*How do you maintain your level of creativity up?*

I'm always learning, no matter where I am, and whatever I learn I love to apply. I spend a lot of time learning code, graphics, and keeping up with technology. When I'm done doing the learning part, I experiment and apply what I've learnt to my business or projects.

I also divide my time between work and leisure because you can't be efficient if you're working all the time or else you'll eventually burn out.

## Alumnus Ghaith Hattab Pursues his Master's at Queen's University in Canada

My name is Ghaith Hattab. I'm originally from Palestine, but I was born in Jordan. I have been in the UAE since 1998, and was brought up here. I graduated from AUS early this year with a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. Currently, I am a research and teaching assistant at Queen's University, Canada. I'm also pursuing my MA.Sc. in electrical engineering, specifically in wireless communications and cognitive radio.



As a graduate of AUS, I know how we used to constantly complain about the heavy work load, the periodic quizzes, midterms, and final exams along with an infinite number of assignments and lab reports. However, no one realizes how beneficial all this is until they graduate and pursue a higher degree or even head towards a career in the industry where being regularly under pressure is the norm. If I did not graduate from AUS, God knows if I would be able to apply to universities in the US, Canada, or even Europe. One of the basic requirements for the universities in the US, for example, is to be a graduate of an ABET accredited program. Besides, to get a scholarship (or more specifically an assistantship) you need to contact professors in these foreign universities, and that happens with the help of your professors at AUS, who are glad to offer you letters of recommendations. AUS is a fundamental block that forms an infrastructure to build your future career, and I advise my colleagues to really exploit the opportunity they have.

I am honored to be a graduate of this institution, and more importantly, I'm very grateful for those professors, especially in the Electrical Engineering Department, for their help and support. To name a few, Dr. Nasser Qaddoumi, Dr. Mohammed El-Tarhuni, Dr. Hassan Mir, and the list goes on. The very supportive faculty at AUS helped me reach many academic milestones and prepared me to achieve many more. They shared their expertise, insights, and inspiration. I have also benefited tremendously from their enthusiasm, understanding, and patience. On the other hand, and on a different side of the planet, I'm currently doing my best to impress the faculty here at Queens. The University is very prestigious with a lovely campus, and I'm grateful to have a chance to be a graduate student here. The only thing that this place lacks is my family I was brought up with, my fiancé, and the friendships I built during my years in the UAE in general, and at the University in particular. Of course I DON'T miss the heat!

Besides the negative temperature degrees, the master's program is more demanding than what we used to have at the undergraduate level. Nevertheless, I am really benefiting from the major elective courses that I took at AUS. I just wish I could have taken more courses in advanced mathematics, which could have made my academic life easier here.

My ambition is to be a part of Apple's Research and Development Center (R&D). I'm very interested in the field of wireless communications, and in particular, the telecommunications industry. A master's degree might not be enough for me, as the R&D positions here are very, very competitive. Therefore, I also have plans to pursue my PhD degree either in the US, or in Canada. Overall, I know that my journey is going to be quite long, but as long as this is what I am interested in doing, I will do whatever it takes to achieve my goal along with my beloved fiancé (and future spouse) Areej.

## Alumni Working at AUS

### Mehvish Razvi

Copywriter, Strategic Communication and Media Department

*Mehvish Razvi is the first mass communication graduate from AUS. After being awarded the President's Cup in 2002, she completed her master's degree in the United States and then moved back to Dubai where she worked in the media. She joined AUS last year as a copywriter and she helps generate content printed at AUS, from the website, to catalogs and press releases.*

I love the reaction I get when I tell current AUS students that I graduated in 2002. They take in a sharp breath and look at me like I'm a fossil! The minute they comprehend that I'm from the second graduating class at AUS, I become prehistoric! Good thing I'm not one of the pioneers; imagine the reaction that would get!

I joined AUS in 1998 when the norm was to go to the States or your home country for higher education. Though it was considered expensive even in those days, it was a great option that was available to us - a Western education while living at home. And so I began my four years at AUS.

When I joined, there were just over 30 students from the Indian subcontinent and the Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis were all part of one cultural club. The new library and engineering buildings hadn't even been constructed. So to say I've seen AUS grow is an understatement.

I started out as a business major. A minor in mass communication was introduced in my third year and as a major after that. So nearing my fourth year, upon encouragement from Dr. Ahmad Al-Issa, I changed my major to mass communication. Best decision ever! During my last year, I worked full time in the Intensive English Program, was on the AUS badminton and squash teams, was the editor of the Leopard student newspaper and I did my internship at Khaleej Times. At my graduation, I was asked to give the student speech at the graduation dinner and was also awarded the President's Cup. So suffice to say, my time at AUS was fulfilling.

Despite having graduated from a University that was fairly new and unaccredited at the time, I managed to get two full scholarships to universities in the US: the American University in Washington and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I opted to do my MA at the latter because I found their research-based master's program more interesting.

After completing my degree, I moved back home in 2006 and I started work as a reporter for Campus Journal, a weekly newspaper that reported on the many universities



that had opened up in the UAE during my absence. A year later, I became the senior editor and loved doing it. Unfortunately, the recession hit and three fulfilling years later, the paper shut down.

I felt a vacuum was created in the market; there was so much University news and no one to report it. So I decided to try my hand at entrepreneurship. Along with a managing partner, I launched Wazzup student newspaper; same audience, same concept. Though we ran the paper for a year, the recession was still about and it really wasn't the best time to realize my dreams of private enterprise.

And that's how I came to work at AUS. Though it started out as a part time stopgap arrangement, I joined during an interesting time: our department was being changed from Media and Printing to Strategic Communication and Media. There was a shift in management, and we were working on launching a new website. I really liked the work and that's how, eight months later, I stayed on as a full time employee.

I enjoy working with the team we have and I like the comfortable atmosphere of AUS. I think I enjoy it more than other alumni who joined straight after graduation because I was in the "real world" for five years. I experienced a world outside AUS. The constant deadlines, though euphoric in their own right, could get quite draining. So I actually appreciate the atmosphere AUS has to offer.

Though I enjoy my job, if I'm still at AUS five years down the line, I would like to shift into the teaching side of things. I thrive on change and work well around it and teaching would be a new territory for me.

But for now, I'm happy where I am and very glad to be here!

## Alumnus Rabiullah Syed Muhammad Awarded Best Master's Student at Kingston University

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

My name is Rabiullah Syed Muhammad and I graduated from AUS in 2005 with a degree in computer engineering. I was also elected as the president of the Pakistani Culture Club during my career at AUS.

*What program did you pursue following graduation and how was it different from your AUS education?*

I completed my master's degree in 2007 from Kingston University in the United Kingdom. The degree I was awarded was a M.Sc. in networking and data communications. I managed to complete the degree with Distinction and also bag the award for best Master's student.

Comparing the education in the UK with that at AUS, I believe that there was more interaction with professors at AUS. In addition, the methods of teaching and the standards at AUS were very good and targeted the right areas in order to develop and polish the basics.

*Did your AUS education help you in choosing to pursue a graduate degree? Why or why not?*

It did help me decide the route forward in my career. The courses offered during the last two years, do give a flavor of the whole discipline a student is enrolled in. In my case, the additional Cisco CCNA training, which was provided, played a major role in choosing my career path.

*What is the greatest challenge(s) you faced as you were working on this degree?*

I believe the challenge I faced during my graduate degree was the teaching structure, where a complete module was taught within a week. I often felt that there was a bit too much information to absorb. I realized the benefit of this method when I started working and was sent to professional courses. Most of these professional courses are offered as 3 or 5 day courses.

*Are you currently employed? And if yes, what type of work do you do? What is a typical day like for you?*

I work as a network/infrastructure specialist at a financial services firm. I am involved in designing, administrating, securing, and supporting the company's infrastructure. In addition, I liaise with large numbers of customers (banks and corporates), both at the business and technical level, and maintain their connections to our data-centers and ensure the security of that link.



A typical day includes customer interaction and maintaining the whole infrastructure. In addition, I am required to keep myself updated with current technologies and perform any upgrade tasks necessary.

*What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life?*

I would like to see myself, over the next few years, getting into project management and also offer services as network/security architect.

Would you like to share with us some of your hobbies? I like travelling and playing golf. The weather in UK doesn't help much with the golf though.

*Are there any comments that you would like to share with the readers?*

Make the best of your time at AUS, as life gets very busy down the line. Make sure you grab the most out of the well-qualified teachers, as it is definitely going to help you in the future. In addition, do get involved in co-curricular activities at the University as one requires both technical and non-technical abilities when out in the world.

## Shahla and Mohsen, Alumni Husband and Wife Pursued Masters at AUS



**Mohsen Nakhaeinejad:** I obtained my B. Sc. in electronics a long time ago in 1997, and then immediately after that I started to work in a manufacturing company. Two years after that I was promoted to the position of managing director. In late 2008, Shahla and I decided that we needed more academic knowledge. So, we both applied to AUS and in 2009 I started my MBA at AUS. We both graduated in June 2011.

*Tell us briefly about yourselves– your education and work experience.*

**Shahla Yassaiei:** I completed my BA in English language and literature in Iran in 2003. Then I realized that I really wanted to teach. So I attended an intensive teacher training course and started teaching English in my hometown of Kerman. In 2005 I obtained my teaching credentials in TESOL, and at that point I was in charge of material development, test writing, and mentoring the new teachers. It was an afternoon in October 2008, when Mohsen, my husband, and I were having a chat over a cup of tea. I am not sure how the whole thing started but we ended up with the idea that both of us needed to do a masters degree. We wanted to start it quickly, in another country, and at a good University. Three months later in January 2009 I was a graduate student studying in the MA TESOL program at the American University of Sharjah!

**Mohsen Nakhaeinejad:** I obtained my B. Sc. in electronics a long time ago in 1997, and then immediately after that I started to work in a manufacturing company. Two years after that I was promoted to the position of managing director. In late 2008, Shahla and I decided that we needed more academic knowledge. So, we both applied to AUS and in 2009 I started my MBA at AUS. We both graduated in June 2011.

*You have had an exciting educational experience at AUS. What were some of your peak experiences together along this educational trail that motivated you to keep going?*

**Shahla:** It was exciting and challenging at the same time. I remember we took turns cooking and cleaning since we were both busy. I used to

proofread Mohsen's assignments and in return he used to listen to my presentations when I was practicing at home. Good old days!

**Mohsen:** For me it was really hard to get back to school after 12 years. The first semester was very tough for me but I worked hard. I don't think I ever studied that hard in my whole life! After a few months of studying I realized how helpful the MBA would be for me. I was able to find practical, tested solutions backed up with theory, for most of the issues I was struggling with in real life business management. This was what made me more excited and motivated me to keep going.

*Shahla, you are currently pursuing your PhD degree. What program did you choose and in which institution and how is it different from your AUS education?*

**Shahla:** I am a PhD researcher at the Institute of Education, University of Reading, England. I am writing my thesis on secondary teachers' reflective practice in the UK. I wrote my masters' thesis on reflective practice at AUS as well. So I can say that it all started from AUS.

There is no coursework for a PhD researcher and there are no classes to attend, although there are regular seminars and I need to attend at least three each year. What I can confidently say is that completing my masters at AUS really prepared me for doing a PhD here. Due to the influence of the TESOL program I know what to do and I know how to deal with problems because the experiences at AUS. I don't panic and I don't lose my way very often, and when I do, I know how to get back on the right track, and I think the credit should go to AUS and its high quality education.

*Mohsen: I do not intend to enter academia and that is why I am not planning to pursue a PhD. I am now well-equipped to go back to the world of business. What is the greatest challenge(s) you are facing as you are working on this degree?*

**Shahla:** I think the major challenge for me would be the "uncertainty" that a PhD researcher always has. You always have tentative conclusions, and now I know that it is part of a PhD, and if you are not unsure, then there is something wrong.

*Are you currently employed? And if yes, what type of work do you do? What is a typical day like for you?*

**Shahla:** I am a full time PhD researcher, which means that only work on my thesis. I don't have a typical day since each day is different. Some days I do a bit of reading and a bit of writing, on others

I attend seminars or travel around the country collecting data.

**Mohsen:** I am self-employed. I have registered a business in the United Kingdom and I have signed a contract with a British company called Imagination Technologies Ltd. I am their representative in the Middle East. I have developed a market for their "Pure" brand products in UAE. These products are wireless music systems and Internet radios. I have made arrangements so these products can be offered to the AUS community on the discount program (See: [www.aus.edu/dp](http://www.aus.edu/dp)).

*What are the top qualities of success that you would advise the students of AUS to cultivate?*

**Shahla:** I would suggest to AUS students that they try to internalize two main qualities: the first one is autonomy and the second one is critical reflection. These two qualities have always helped me succeed in pursuing my dreams.

**Mohsen:** I think the MBA is an expensive and demanding program. So, in order to get the most out of it, I suggest that students work for a few years in the real world before joining this graduate program. This will help them have a better understanding of the program.

*Would you like to share with us some of your hobbies?*

**Shahla:** I love reading so I spend a lot of my free time reading self-development books. I also enjoy walking; it helps me clear my mind.

**Mohsen:** My two favorite activities are exercising and walking. I also like listening to music and watching movies.

*Are there any other comments that you would like to share with the readers?*

**Shahla:** I spent two and half years at AUS and I absolutely enjoyed every minute of it. The University is a very good one in terms of its standing and the quality of education. AUS students get a lot of support, and I do hope that they all make the most of the time they spend there.

**Mohsen:** The times that you spend at University are some of the best moments of your life. You should make important decisions about your future life at that time and work hard to achieve your goals. So, while having fun as a student, work and study hard.

# “Reemami” an Inspiring and Creative Fashion Label by Alumna Reema Al Banna

Born and raised in the UAE, Reema began her career as a graphic designer after graduating from AUS before pursuing her passion for haute couture. She took a two-year fashion course at the prominent French Fashion University in Dubai, ESMOD, before launching her dream label Reemami. A brand for the young and young at heart, Reemami is shaped by Reema's love for creativity, through utilizing unexpected cuts and details, which give her line its signature style.

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

My name is Reema Al Banna, I have Palestinian origins, and was born and raised in the UAE. I graduated in 2009 from AUS with a design management degree; then life took me on a roller coaster of careers and work experiences. Throughout I realized that the art of designing is the pleasure of my life!

*Why did you decide to start Reemami, your fashion brand?*

Applying to jobs with my design management degree was interesting! I got hired as a graphic designer, and literally learned everything from scratch at work, since design management only taught me the basics. It was fun as I found my passion through graphic design and it was an amazing foundation to expose my creativity and get my work out there on streets, billboards, and online. But at times I would feel like it was not enough. I felt like I was a little constrained by the briefs or the clients' desires and their need to stick to the familiar, which was part of the daily struggle to always be "creative."

I needed another source to express myself freely and without constraints, so I turned to my other passion, which was fashion! As you know, a girl is exposed to fashion from the day she is born and that is why I was obsessed with shopping, making my own clothes and continuously looking for unique pieces.

So while working as a graphic designer, I enrolled in night classes at the French fashion University Esmod, and took up a two year program. That experience helped me create a very strong basis in fashion designing, pattern making, cutting, entering the fashion world, and pursuing my dream.

*How did your AUS education help you start your own business?*

The design management major was one that showed me a wide perspective of possibilities. It showed us how to handle the business side and how to manage our companies in addition to the endless basics and core of design. Starting "Reemami" came from a wonderful opportunity which was given to me by S\*uce Boutique, one of the best boutiques in Dubai, by joining a design competition and I got noticed by the judging panel, in return I got a push from S\*uce to start my line Reemami. Keeping the pace going was the hard part, and it was at



this point that I believe my education at AUS helped me to keep the business going.

*What are the challenges that you face as an emerging designer in Dubai and what makes you stand out?*

Well, at first the expenses of having a small business and employing and managing employees according to the rules and regulations were costly. As a young entrepreneur I needed more support as an emerging company. To overcome this challenge, I had to focus on the positives of expanding and growing Reemami, so I always had to stay original. Reemami turned out to be a unique brand as I love thinking of the improbable, love to make twists to every item I create, in a way or another and have explicit tailoring and I like to treat each piece as a piece of art on its own. What makes the brand stand out is always keeping an eye on craftsmanship. Moreover, having a strong brand identity also helps a lot.

*How do you maintain your level of creativity up? Does your inner personality seek outlets for your creativity in designing clothing?*

I maintain my creative thoughts by balancing my personal life and work life. By having time to meet friends and family, workout, and enjoy a good dose of activities daily, I can remain creative, because honestly locking yourself up in a room and trying to come up with ideas doesn't always work. Sometimes creative people get stuck with a thought, that's when I advise people to leave the whole



Designs from alumna Reema Al Banna's Reemami fashion line

idea aside take a good break and come back with a fresh perspective.

Yes, I always look for outlets in designing clothes, a lot of times my designs reflect my need to break the norm in the retail market, I just love coming up with new fashion or fashion that could be the first of its kind.

*Tell us more about being listed in Emirates Woman Magazine among the top 25 faces to know in the UAE in 2012 and being selected among Ahlan's Best 10 Fashion brands in 2011.*

I've been so blessed to get all this recognition and appreciation from the media. I work really hard and a little appreciation really pushes you to do better every season. It has been an honor and definitely not expected! I was also blessed to be nominated as the Best Regional designer in 2011 and 2012 by Grazia Style Awards, which was a super thrilling experience!

*Who are your favorite designers?*

Well my favorite designers kind of vary from season to season. So I can't really stick to the same list! This season Spring 13 Dolce & Gabbana made a splash which will definitely set many trends for the market. I loved Alexander Wang's Spring collection, Lanvin did the same signature style which is always empowering for women. I'm also a huge fan of Ellie Saab & Azadina Alaia, especially since they come from Arab origins and are making solid marks in the international fashion scene.

*If fellow alumni would like to see your lines of apparel, they can visit your website: www.reemami.com. Is there also a nearby retail store that they may visit? If so, what boutiques in Sharjah and Dubai would offer the most complete line of your designs?*

They can go to our website and definitely visit Reemami's Page on Facebook and Twitter, as we are very active on social media and we always share our latest news and trends.

For my Fall'12/13 collection I stock my fashion at S\*uce boutique across the emirates, and I also take online orders.

*What advice would you give to AUS alumni that would like to start a fashion line?*

I advise them to work hard, and be persistent. Take opportunities, they only come once! In order to create your own fashion empire one day, you'd better be ready for the roller coaster ride of this industry's ups and downs.

Get yourself in a fashion school. It is highly recommended because it will definitely give you edge and more importantly connections with the right people. Never be afraid of criticism, take it constructively. Take risks, and never be afraid to try something new. Most importantly be yourself, express your emotions/moods through your designs and always be unique.

## Entrepreneur and Fashionista Alumna Mona Kattan Dreams of an Empire in the Beauty Industry

Mona started out her career in banking after gaining a bachelor's in finance from AUS in 2008, and although she excelled, she knew there was an entrepreneur just waiting to be unleashed. Mona left the world of banking to set up Mastermind PR, from which she gained invaluable experience in varying fields of business.

Last year, a friend asked Mona if she would be interested in opening a salon, something that had always been her dream and so Doll House was created. "We could have easily opened a typical salon but that wasn't our goal. We wanted it to be different and offer a unique experience," explained Mona, who is also co-founder of the fashion label The Puppet Show and founder of the Dubai lifestyle blog adventuresinmonaland.com. As well as making Doll House the number one salon in Dubai, Mona plans to continue building her businesses one by one with the hope of one day establishing her own corporation of companies.



Mona said that the main idea behind this venture is to add bling or personality to your shoes. You can also take your best pair of sunglasses or bag and make them as unique as the inner glamour queen you've always wanted to be. Just a touch or over-the-top, the M→ Glam adds a touch of magnetism that can be seen miles away!

"I came up with this concept nearly three years ago, when it became obvious that everyone was battling it out with their red soles. Personally, I love colored soles, but I was getting bored. I wanted more," explained Mona. After numerous attempts to find the perfect sole, she put together the 'blinged' sole.

Mona and her partners at Skin Jam found "Bling Your Soles" an interesting addition as they studied the market in the Middle East and in other regions and found that designers have been emphasizing using more crystallizing for shoes.

"I have always loved crystallizing and we have been experimenting with this for so long now. We can add anything to glam up your wardrobe including crystals, pearls, studs, and any embellishment you would like! We have many more exciting collaborations to come with Skin Jam. They will always be a way to express your individuality and personality with bling, which to me is the most exciting and glamorous way to communicate," said Mona.

M→ Glam has recently joined forces with the "Crystallizing Gurus" of the UAE, Skin Jam, to give bling lovers the option of adding a touch of glamour to the soles of their favorite heels. "Simply grab your favorite heels and drop them off at Skin Jam kiosks in either the Dubai Mall or Dubai Festival City and choose the colors you would like to use to "Bling Your Soles," said Mona.



## Alumna Anna Ray Shares Her Working Experience at the AUS Office of International Exchange Programs

I moved to AUS while I was in high school. My parents got jobs here and I thought it would be an awesome way to spend my last ten months of high school. Now that I'm done with college and worked nearly three years in my first real job at AUS, I think it was an amazing way to spend eight and a half years. I left AUS in December, which is so weird because AUS is home to me. It's where I've spent the most formative years of my adult life and to think that it won't be anymore--well, I'm not quite sure what to think of that.

*I worked as the advisor at the International Exchange Office at AUS. That means I advise students who are planning to come to AUS for 1-2 semesters, and AUS students who are planning to go abroad for 1-2 semesters.*

AUS had exchange students before the International Exchange Office existed. The office was established as one of AUS's key strategic initiatives and charged with increasing the number of exchanges students from the half-dozen or so we had at the office's founding in 2010 to five hundred! Student exchange was not new to AUS, but volume certainly was. We were used to sending and receiving fewer than ten students each semester. We didn't have brochures or a website, and there were only a few universities our students could attend. We needed a lot more to meet the Chancellor's objective, and so for most of the last three years, my main job has been not just to advise students, but especially to lay the groundwork that will enable a far greater number of students to come and go. Since the office was established, we have received over 200 students in total, which is a great number! Our goal, though, is to have twice this number coming and going each semester. The good news is that there is incredible demand for AUS from students and institutions abroad. In the Fall 2012 semester, for instance, we had 30 students (our biggest number yet for a Fall semester) representing 15 nations, and this is growing each semester. The challenge is accommodating this high demand. We cannot bring in students unless we are sending them out--the nature of an exchange agreement demands balance in the number of incoming and outgoing students--and we have so many students wanting to come to AUS, but still relatively few going out. We are working hard now to create that same demand for AUS students to go abroad.

I think part of the problem is our students don't realize the opportunities they have abroad. We are partnered with top-100 universities in the US, including three renowned business schools in Europe and Canada, and we are regularly contacted by institutions who want to start exchange agreements. AUS students who go abroad not only receive a degree from a world-class institution, they get the experience of attending two



world-class institutions. This reaps benefits not only academically but also personally and professionally. More and more employers worldwide are seeking graduates with international experience because of the skills students gain while studying abroad. This includes cross-cultural communication, independence, self-reliance, as well as problem-solving skills, and numerous others.

It was exciting and rewarding to be part of this office because I can see the impact of study abroad on my students who went abroad. It's only been four months but they come back new people--more confident, more excited, they're better communicators. And I can see that they know it, too. It's similarly rewarding getting to know the incoming exchange students because I see the change taking place. At first they're blown away by the campus, by Dubai, by everything that is so different. They're challenged by their classes and professors, and the cultural adjustments they have to make. By the end, most want to stay, and many look for jobs here after graduating.

When I moved here in 2004, almost no one (myself included) had heard of the UAE, and now AUS is a top 500 University. I'm thrilled to have been a part of it, however small a part that is. I'm really proud.

I've always wanted an international career--a job where I could be among other cultures and travel extensively. I never even considered working in a study abroad office--I didn't even know it was an option. Now I think it was the ideal job. That's what AUS has been doing to me all along: turning the most unexpected things into the most meaningful parts of my life.

## Alumna Hana Taryam, A Graduate Trainee at Etisalat

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

I am a computer science graduate from AUS, and am currently working at Etisalat, one of the leaders in the telecommunications industry in the Middle East.

*On a typical day in your position, what do you do?*

I am a graduate trainee within the IT department at Etisalat. I am part of a team that is responsible for updating one of Etisalat's computer systems, and I provide innovative ideas to improve the performance. I am responsible for one of these systems and I constantly liaise with my director and other team members to inform them of the barriers and

enablers I face in the process and to gain feedback on how to overcome these.

*What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?*

The part I find most satisfying is overcoming the challenges of a task assigned to me, such as meeting several deadlines at once. The most challenging part of my job that I have noticed has to do with communication gaps. It can be frustrating trying to get a message across to various stakeholders who may communicate in different ways and may not necessarily understand the underlying message. However, it is just another obstacle that must be overcome and results in improving my own communication skills.

*How did studying computer science help prepare you to be successful in this job?*

It gave me the skills to do my job well. There are still areas where I lack knowledge, but being a graduate of AUS allowed me to recognize the different ways in which I can gain new, relevant skills and knowledge such as research, teamwork, and speaking with key stakeholders.

*What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself?*

I aim to keep an open mind as I face new situations every day. I attempt to embrace change and diversity, despite



the frustrations that may arise because of them, in order to become successful.

*In your experience, what are possible challenges for alumnae in the workplace that might be turned into opportunities?*

Alumnae may face conflict in the work place, sometimes from older colleagues. I would advise alumnae to handle these situations diplomatically, don't be too offended or upset. Use the situation to gain experience in dealing with different personalities.

*What special advice would you give a person entering your field of study?*

Being in the technology field is challenging at times as software constantly gets updated, and adapting to the rapid technological changes needs to be met with a balanced mix of patience and enthusiasm.

*What are the top qualities of success that you would advise the alumnae and female students of AUS to cultivate?*

Make sure you establish a reputation as a solid worker from the beginning. Be recognized as a worker who is responsible and reliable. Good communication skills, dedication as well as being dependable and responsible all help you succeed. These qualities are very important in all fields and employers and companies consider them very valuable.

## Unilever and AUS Sign MoU

Unilever, one of the world's largest fast moving consumable goods (FMCG) companies, recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with AUS to affirm its commitment towards the recruitment of the University's alumni and students; as well as be an active participant in the various initiatives that serve institutional advancement objectives.

"The partnership between Unilever and AUS has been well established for a number of years now,"

said Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs. "This MoU emphasizes the intent of both entities for an ongoing understanding to advance cooperative ventures for mutual benefit and the development of new initiatives," she added.

Unilever is one of the most active AUS alumni employers in terms of campus presence. Unilever Chairman for North Africa and Middle East, Mr. Sanjiv Mehta, recently addressed the graduating class of spring 2012 and shared the his own life lessons acquired from personal experiences. The company also sponsored the spring 2012 graduation luncheon. Additionally, Unilever participated in the Career Advancement Lecture Series, encouraging AUS senior students to participate in "Unilever Idea Trophy Challenge," which is a capacity-building initiative, as well as sponsoring and actively taking part in the annual AUS Business Forum and Career Fair for recruitment purposes.

"The American University of Sharjah is an impressive higher education institution in the UAE and the region. It is one of the key sources of talent for our business. We have close to a dozen AUS alumni working for Unilever in the region, and I can confidently say that the level of preparedness of AUS graduates to meet the challenges of business today is high. So, if you think you have what it takes to make a real difference in a fast paced business environment and to the consumers and communities we serve then we would love to hear from you," said Mr. Assaf Qureshi, Vice President of Unilever North Africa and Middle East.

Alumnus Mohammed Mustafa, employed at Unilever as the regional supply chain manager, described his experience as follows, "Since joining Unilever, I have always been the youngest member of all the teams that I manage." He adds, "With Unilever, I get the opportunity to travel and do business in countries I have never been to before!"

Alumnus Mohannad Haddad employed at Unilever as a brand manager said, "I am very grateful to be a member of the esteemed Unilever family; it's the home and school for successful people who seek growth in their careers and building bright futures. It is so good to be true!"



Alumni employed at Unilever

Alumna Zeina Al Kouka said, "I chose Unilever first and foremost because it is known to be the best school of marketing. Therefore, in order to develop myself personally and professionally, I knew there was no better place to do that than at Unilever. From its wonderful and wide assortment of brands, to its proud history, to its performance culture, it is truly a place I am proud to say I work in. My first mission was in Brand Building, specifically on deodorants (Axe, Rexona, and Dove). From there I moved on to a sales mission for Carrefour Market and then back to Brand Building where I still am today working on 'Face Care – Ponds.' It has been a wonderful journey so far and I have learned a lot about building relationships, recognizing and tackling my skill gaps, and at the same time leveraging my strengths. And through it all, of course, I am continuously learning and building a much stronger knowledge on execution, strategy, communications, marketing, and most importantly the customers and consumers in our region. I highly recommend to all graduates out there to join the Unilever family and choose the function within Unilever that they feel most passionate about, because only with passion comes success. Finally, I will say that entering the world of Unilever like any other multinational FMCG might not be a quick process so you must persist to continue this journey and fight to reach the end because trust me it is worth it."

Alumna Raghad Daher also commented on her experience at Unilever by saying, "It is great! I get exposure to the entire manufacturing process that occurs at Lipton. Beyond the technical experience, the work environment at Unilever is exactly what I have always wanted in a company and I look forward to coming to work here every day to face new challenges."

Alumna Maryam Minhas, a graduate of SBM in spring 2012, said, "After graduating from AUS, Unilever is the best thing that happened to me this year! The experience so far has been phenomenal and full of continuous learning and personal enrichment. I definitely could not have asked for a better kick-start to my career!"

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# Alumna Lina Ahmad Obtains a Master's Degree from the Architectural Association School of Architecture

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*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

That's a difficult one... Complex, stubborn...

*You obtained your bachelor's degree in architecture cum laude in 2003; what are some of your memories of your undergraduate education?*

Myspace on the third floor of the architecture building... I know work, effort and long hours were involved, but their memory is sort of haze now... the vivid ones are the amazing energy charged atmosphere generated from 30 or so students working towards the same goal, the excitement at establishing new ideas, of standing and proudly presenting them, the amazing feeling of accomplishment at the end of every term, and the over confidence of going out there and definitely changing the world... But the best of it all were the giggles, the snacks and moments of outburst laughter we used to have, typically at the end of the day ... probably as a way of recharging.



*Did your AUS education help you choose to pursue a graduate degree? Why or why not?*

In a way it did, I believe it opened my eyes into ways of thinking that I wouldn't have experienced anywhere else around here. The way I approached my graduate thesis is through experimental architecture, where discoveries made along the way have an impact on the research direction. I believe that experience had an influence on my graduate design based master's program choice: Research Design Laboratory at the AA.

*You completed a master's degree at the Architectural Association School of Architecture, UK, how was that different from your AUS education?*

Actually the main difference was the city I was in; well, the University differed as well. It wasn't anything like AUS's University dedicated campus, but a school building located within the city itself. Also, I know the architecture building now has an amazing 'prototype' lab, but it was at the AA where I first got introduced to the concept of 'parametric' design and how to extend the design thinking process onto incorporating the machine's intelligence, resulting usually after lots of experimentation in unforeseen results. But the main difference was the city. There was so much happening around, it was simply impossible to keep up with. At times, it was quite frustrating. One of my favourite activities there was meandering around and exploring the city's oldness, and their dialogue with today's newly established ones.

*You are currently employed at BDP MENA as a senior architect, what type of work do you do there? What is a typical day like for you?*

Throughout my career, I've had exposure to different types of projects: hospitality, residential, office interiors, etc. However, for almost a year now, I have been the design team leader for one of two colleges we are currently working on in Qatar. A typical day on that project starts with catching up with unfinished tasks of yesterday, followed by meetings, communications and coordination exercises with the engineers and other involved parties within BDP UK studios. That usually takes up all afternoon, followed up by a late evening of urgent tasks to be completed for the next day. The speed of this project and the synergy between the client and consultant, often results in several deadlines per one week.

*You have been involved in many special projects since graduating from AUS, can you describe which one or ones were most interesting and rewarding and why?*

The most rewarding one was the BDP lounge at cityscape 2010. I suppose what was compelling about it is that it actually presented the message BDP was trying to convey. Their brochures had 'community / people' written on them, but the lounge stood as actual proof; it made people see rather than hear their statement. Curating the whole process, from the idea inception, and overseeing all details right through; the lounge

or 'places 4 people' as it was called, vividly contrasted itself to all other stands with its use of simple cardboard boxes arrayed around the circumference of the space allocated. The lounge came into existence by immense collaborative effort of students, staff and directors.

I believe that over the course of the four-day exhibit, it succeeded in giving everyone something to relate to: the upper management a place to launch and host executive meetings; the staff a space to meet fellow architects and designers, present work and discuss future possibilities; University students a structure that they could proudly point to and said to have played a part of its design and erection; and finally school children a place where their art pieces were exhibited, selected, and awarded.

*You have been continuously employed since you graduated from AUS. Do you have any hints for future graduates on how to find and keep positions?*

Well I'll start with a word for AUS student - the prototype lab you have USE it, you'll be amazed at what you can get out of it. And it's an opportunity you are unlikely to have out there in the professional world.

And for graduates, no matter how tough it gets out there keep holding onto those dreams you once had, and most importantly keep working at them, developing and realizing them even if only in bits. It's tough out there, and in my point of view, needs immense effort and self determination to realize when to push forward, and when to go with the flow and take a step back.

*Do you have any plans for any future exhibitions of your work?*

Not so much as an exhibit, but to define my work, take it a step further... To find a way to realize and really do 'designs' for people and ones that push boundaries ... Ones that matter... Hopefully in the near future...

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## CAAD Dean and Alumni Listed Among Top 50 Architects in the Middle East Region

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Professor Peter Di Sabatino, Dean of the College of Architecture, Art and Design (CAAD) was recently named by Middle East Architect magazine as one of the "Power 50: The Top Individuals that have Helped to Shape the Architecture of the Middle East Region" in its December issue. The Dean was ranked number 17, while two AUS alumni: Ahmed Al Ali, Chairman of X Architects, and Abdulla Al Shamsi, Founder of Shape Architecture, were ranked at 32 and 46, respectively.

Dean Di Sabatino commented that "it is an honor to be listed amongst those influencing architecture in the region; of course, the listing is as the Dean of CAAD at AUS. This is clearly and certainly a reflection and representation of the students, alumni, staff, and faculty at the college and University. This is recognition for all of us at CAAD and AUS."

"It is important to note that two of CAAD's alumni were listed amongst the top 50 architects, and that both their firms are small to medium size private practices founded by the alumni mentioned. This is a significant articulation of indigenous, local professional practices being created by our alumni, and being recognized for their excellence," remarked Dean Di Sabatino.

Professor Di Sabatino has been Dean of CAAD for four years. Prior to that, he was the Chair of the Department of Environmental Design at Art Centre College of Design in Pasadena, California, and a visiting professor at both the Politecnico di Milano, Italy, and the National Institute of Design (NID), India. He is a licensed architect in California, and has been in private practice in architecture and design, as well as speaking worldwide.

Ahmed Al Ali set up X Architects in 2003 following his graduation from AUS. His firm picked up an MEA Award for Best Concept Development in 2009 for its sustainable Xeritown scheme. X-Architects followed up its success by winning the prize for Best Boutique Firm in 2010.

Abdullah Ali Al Shamsi was named Young Architect of the Year 2012. SHAPE Architecture Practice and Research is a UAE-based architecture firm founded by Al Shamsi in 2004. SHAPE's interests lie in the incorporation of digital design and production technologies within the design process. The firm believes in the importance of research to further enhance the quality of the designing process. SHAPE is currently working on a diverse number of projects, which include master plans, hotels, bridges and private residences across the region.

## “AUS Has Shaped Who I am Today,” Says Alumna Fatima Ghali

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

I am Fatima Ghali Naabba from Nigeria. I completed my bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing and management from AUS in 2009. I am currently pursuing my master's in marketing management at Bournemouth University, UK.

*You are currently pursuing a graduate degree, how is that different from your AUS education?*

Generally, a master's is more challenging as it requires intensive, independent study and research. However the education at AUS is significantly more demanding as it requires consistent work on a daily basis. There is a large volume of quizzes, midterms, presentations, and projects within a short period of time required for all courses. In addition, attendance is mandatory, as missing few classes can significantly affect your grade. Conversely, at Bournemouth University, the system allows you to push studies into the passenger's seat, as it gives time between major assignments and exams as opposed to AUS where one has to be constantly working to meet deadlines.

*Did your AUS education help you in choosing to pursue a graduate degree? Why or why not?*

Yes. My AUS education was very important in my decision to pursue my graduate degree. It has shaped who I am today. Prior to my undergraduate studies, it had never been my aspiration to further my studies. But being able to scale all the work pressure and sleepless nights, I believe I have acquired a grounded foundation needed to undertake any postgraduate course of my choice as well as having a new zeal for learning and continuously improving my knowledge bank.

*What is the greatest challenge(s) you are facing as you are working on this degree?*

The challenge that I faced was at the beginning of the program. I graduated in 2009, so I have been out of academia for about two years. The whole going back to school, integrating studies with my personal life, working in teams, etc. was a bit difficult initially; however, I adjusted. In spite of these initial snags, I strongly believe that completing my first degree at AUS has been an achievement for me because it truly set a foundation that I needed in order to excel in further studies and employment opportunities. So far, I have not been faced with any challenge I view as impossible. I attribute this to the wonderful and inspiring AUS faculty who equipped me with all that is necessary to survive in any academic or work environment.

*Are you currently employed? And if yes, what type of work do you do? What is a typical day like for you?*

I'm not yet employed, but hopefully after completing my master's. Each day is different depending on my University schedule. There are days when I have a tight schedule. The sessions are long so, all I do when I am home is watch TV and

relax. There are days when I have group meetings, and those days are usually dedicated to studies and assignments. I am more productive at night so the days that I don't have classes I study and do my assignments from morning till midnight. Fortunately I don't have early morning classes so the system allows me get my work done late at night. Weekends are my leisure time; I hang out with friends, cook, browse the internet, and go shopping.

*What specific goals have you established for your life?*

I hope to work with a multinational firm in a progressively responsible position that will allow me to apply and utilize my learnt skills; these include working in complex work situations. In the long term I see myself growing and adapting to new and exciting challenges in a competitive and pleasant environment. I wish to improve my attitude towards both corporate and social responsibility.

*What are you planning to do after completing your master's degree?*

I am graduating in April 2013, God willing. It will probably take some months for me to start working, as the job market in Nigeria is saturated at the moment. In the interim, I plan to engage in voluntary work to help develop my community as well as build my corporate career. I hope to attain an employment contract with a firm of international repute by mid- 2013.

*Would you like to share with us some of your hobbies?*

I love meeting new people, visiting new places, browsing the internet, watching TV, cooking, and reading religious books.

*Are there any comments that you would like to share with the readers?*

I feel so blessed and honored to be part of the AUS community, and I am absolutely delighted to be featured in this issue of AUS Connect.



## Mohammed Al Sayed, An Alumnus Who Constantly Seeks More Knowledge

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

I graduated from AUS in 2006, with a bachelor's degree in finance. Following that I pursued my MBA at AUS and completed it in 2008. In addition to that, I undertook a master's of science degree in investment banking and Islamic finance at the University of Reading in the United Kingdom. Part of the latter included taking three courses at INCEIF University in Malaysia, which I finished and received a Chartered Islamic Finance Professional (CIFP) certificate. Currently, I have almost completed my Ph.D. in Islamic finance at the University of Wollongong in Dubai. Outside of academia, I have also demonstrated a commitment to improving my performance in the world of business. Since 2006, alongside my studies, I have been working and managing one of our family businesses based in Dubai. In this position, I have gained first-hand knowledge of most aspects of business finance, including long and short-term strategy, accounting, monitoring and reporting systems, cash flow, investment and debt management. My father always raised us with a sense of responsibility from the time we were young. He taught us this by making us work in the company since we were in high school and receive a salary just like an ordinary employee.

*What are the challenges that you face as an emerging entrepreneur and what makes you stand out?*

The main challenge is to figure out how to delegate responsibilities to our employees while empowering them and making them accountable for their decisions. How to motivate employees to work in a family business environment is a great concern. By the end of the day, I consider these employees as the company's income; if they are satisfied, this means we maintain a good income. The strategies I have utilized for motivating employees have worked out well, and I am managing around 50 employees. Most of these employees have very little formal education, so one of the ways of motivating them is to sit with them for lunch sometimes, listen to their concerns, and be down to earth with them to encourage them to be more productive.

*You are managing numerous companies. What business achievement are you most proud of?*

A business achievement to me is equivalent to any success that we achieve. So I basically look at the company's financial statement, which is very good so far. We have 10 family companies in different industries, and we have recently opened the 11th company that deals with auditing, management consultancy, and financial advising. This is the latest achievement to date.

*How are you able to coordinate your time as an entrepreneur and a Ph.D. candidate?*

I started my Ph.D. at the end of 2010. The Ph.D. at the University of Wollongong is divided into stages. First is the coursework, which involves eight courses. After the courses there is a comprehensive exam, and then I began



writing the dissertation. Writing a dissertation requires a lot of reading of scholarly literature. Finding the time to read all the needed articles is a very big challenge that I am facing as this requires dedication. In summary, the way I am able to manage all my responsibilities requires proper time management, in the midst of all work-related issues, as it helps facilitate daily life.

*What specific goals have you established for your life?*

I am 30 years old and I feel that what I have achieved so far: a bachelor's degree, two master's degrees, and I being halfway through my Ph.D., in addition to managing a family business and taking care of my own family, is an accomplishment. My main goal is to sustain my family business because I believe that the new generation should get the experience from the old generation, in spite of the lack of social media and the latest technologies at that time. Another goal is that I would like to stay in touch with AUS because I appreciate the education it has given me.

*You have graciously agreed to be a panelist at the upcoming AUS Business Forum. Could you please share with your fellow alumni your interest in serving as a speaker at the Forum and the benefits of such forums to alumni and graduating seniors?*

My main objective in serving as a speaker is to enlighten graduating students about life post-education. I would like to explain to them that they should climb the ladder slowly and not expect to be in the position of a director from day one. They should always have in mind a clear goal that they would like to achieve.

*How do you like to spend your free time?*

I am very family oriented. So in my free time, I like to engage with my daughter Mariam and son Abdulla. I also spend time exercising in the sports complex at our house.

# Alumna Ban Kattan Aims to Represent Iraqi Women Through Knowledge



*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines?*

I am Ban Kattan, from Iraq; I graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration with a double concentration in finance and accounting in 2007 (cum laude). I completed internships with Ernst & Young, Motorola, and AIESEC during my years at AUS. Upon graduation I worked at Motorola, Mars GCC, and Musanada in Abu Dhabi. I was usually the youngest person in my department.

*Tell us a little about your experience in participating in the first TEDxBaghdadWomen conference in Iraq*

I was part of the team responsible for the set up and execution of the very first TEDxBaghdadWomen, which took place on December 1, 2012. For the first time, Iraq joined the world at around 150 TEDxWomen events with 10,000+ live streams taking place globally at the same time, making TEDxWomen one of the most globally watched TEDx events. For Iraq, the event was of great significance as it marked the very first event organized by and for Iraqi women,

with women speakers and an overwhelming majority of women attendees. Recognizing the importance of the event, TEDxBaghdadWomen was sponsored by UN Women, The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and attended by UN Women Representatives in Iraq as well as various other international agencies. The speakers came from various provinces in Iraq and different walks of life, and took the stage to share their outstanding experiences in addressing the multiple challenges facing Iraqi women living in Iraq today. The speakers shared success stories as academics, businesswomen, students, physically challenged, independent individuals, and philanthropists in order to empower and inspire other Iraqi women to succeed in today's Iraq. The event also held an exhibition for sustainable development projects completed by TEDxBaghdadWomen in collaboration with the Widows Foundation, The Women's Association for Hearing Impairment, and the Orphan Foundation. The event has also helped in knowledge transfer to local Iraqi TEDxBaghdadWomen volunteers through gaining experience related to the field of event

management and collaboration with international organizations.

*You pursued a degree in gender and women's studies at York University in Canada. Tell us how is that different from your AUS education and how did AUS help you pursue that degree?*

I feel that the difference between my education at AUS and at York lies mainly in my transferring from a business degree to a social science one. The first relies heavily on number-processing and strategic thinking, while the other mainly revolves around extensive research and observation of individuals and society. Other than that, I can say with all confidence that our education at AUS is definitely up to par with education in North America. As a matter of fact, it is my education at AUS that has made my academic transfer to Canada a smooth and manageable one. I am certain that I would not have been able to achieve the academic distinction I have reached to date without having attended AUS first. In addition and as further evidence that AUS's education is equal to education in North America, I was only required to complete a few courses to obtain my second bachelor's upon credit transfer from my AUS degree.

*What is the greatest challenge(s) you faced as you were working on this degree?*

Personally, the greatest challenge I faced was switching my operations and numbers-based process of thinking to looking beyond at the people who make these processes and the society surrounding them. From assignments filled with numbers and formulas, I had to start writing extensive research papers. My second degree has challenged me to work towards gaining a further comprehensive view by combining financial operations with social variables.

*Are you planning to pursue a graduate degree? Why or why not?*

Absolutely! My degree from AUS has given me the sufficient skills and understanding of business sectors and operations, and my degree in gender and women's studies has provided me with interdisciplinary knowledge regarding relations of power in the lives of individuals, groups, and cultures. I am currently applying for a master's degree in the

fields of development studies and financial economics in order to apply my education in creating sustainable human capital and infrastructure projects for people and organizations, including in my native Iraq.

*You have been invited to become a member of the Golden Key International Association for Academic Excellence. Tell us more about that*

As a student in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies at York University, one of Canada's largest faculties nationally with over 22,000 students, I was fortunate to rank within the top 15% of performing students. The University recognized this by extending an invitation to join the Dean's Circle of Student Scholars. Upon this recognition, I received a membership invitation from the US-based Golden Key International Honor Society, the world's largest collegiate honor society for academic excellence. I will be attending the Canadian regional summit in late January.

*What specific goals have you established for your life?*

I have always endeavored to play an active role in improving people's lives in any way possible by using my knowledge and resources for this goal. Other than playing a role in improving the living conditions of people in Iraq, I aim to represent a sector of Iraqi people (particularly women), give a voice to our concerns, dreams, and ambitions and act as a bridge between Iraq and the world.

*Would you like to share with us some of your hobbies?*

I fell in love with books from the first day my father read a book to me in candlelight as missiles rained over Baghdad. Reading has always nourished me spiritually and intellectually and opened my eyes and mind to new worlds. I also recently discovered my passion for hiking, since I moved to Canada and started exploring its beautiful nature.

*Are there any comments that you would like to share with the readers?*

Live life as honestly and genuinely as you can. Being honest with yourself and others is the essence of happiness. Never be afraid that your dream is too big or that it sounds impossible. All great human accomplishments began with an impossible dream.

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# AUS Alumni in the News: Alumnus Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani, Scales Mount Aconcagua in South America

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On January 22, 2013 the national newspapers provided the news of alumnus Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani's recent conquest of the 6,962-meter Mount Aconcagua in South America, the highest peak in the Western Hemisphere.

Al Thani holds a bachelor's degree in business administration '04 in addition to an MBA '06. He is the Director General of the Sharjah Statistics Centre, Managing Director of the Sharjah Golf and Shooting Club, and Co-Founder of Musafir.com, scaled. Al Thani scaled Mount Aconcagua during a three-week adventure to reach the summit of the mountain. This is part of his quest to conquer the Seven Summits, the highest peaks on each of the seven continents of the world.

This event was part of a recent expedition led by alumnus Al Thani, with the noble mission to raise awareness that education is a right for everyone in the name of Reach Out to Asia (ROTA) – which is the Qatari non-governmental organization that focuses on making high quality education accessible across Asia.

In his statement to the press Al Thani indicated that "This climb requires serious commitment, extensive mountaineering experience and excellent physical fitness – especially when called upon to climb 8 hours a day. The summit day was supposed to take 8 hours but it took us 13 hours due to the bad weather conditions. This adventure is a true test of endurance ability. We were exposed on summit day to strong winds with a speed of 60 kms per hour and snow storms with low temperatures reaching to -20 degrees Celsius and poor visibility".



Al Thani was accompanied by Raed Zidan, Ziad Al Sharabi, Anis Tabka and videographer Elia Saikaly. Together this group forms "Arabs with Altitude," a team of explorers who trek the globe in search of higher heights to reach. This new adventure is but one of six for Al Thani, it is in addition to his climbs of: Mount Kilimanjaro, Mont Blanc, Mount Vinson, Mount Elbrus and Mount Kosciuszko. "As I continue to challenge myself to see how much I can attain, I hope others will find inspiration in my actions, pushing themselves to the limits and finding that they, too, can come out victorious if they work hard enough," Al Thani added.

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## We Want You To Stay In Touch!

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The AUS Office of Development and Alumni Affairs is keen to stay in touch with all of our alumni. We hope that you will take the opportunity to tell us about what is happening in your lives. Had a promotion at work? The joy of a new addition to your family? A major move across the globe, or a minor move around the corner? We want to know and share your news with your AUS friends and colleagues.

*AUS Connect* is a wonderful way to stay in touch with your fellow alums, teachers and mentors. It is also a great way to show our friends in the community how proud our wonderful alumni are making us.

Send us an email. Our address is [ODAA@aus.edu](mailto:ODAA@aus.edu) We look forward to hearing from each and every one of you.

Office of Development and Alumni Affairs  
American University of Sharjah  
P.O.Box: 26666, Sharjah, UAE  
Tel:+(971) 6 515 2547,  
Fax: +(971) 6 515 2297  
[www.aus.edu](http://www.aus.edu)