

# AUSconnect

## 1870 Alumni Welcome Sharjah Ruler to AUS Alumni Reunion Dinner



His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of AUS, attended the Third Annual AUS Alumni Reunion Dinner held at the University's main plaza on January 21.



His Highness welcomed the 1870 alumni who attended the event and said that alumni reunions were wonderful opportunities to reconnect with old friends, and to make new friends. He said that AUS was steadily continuing its progress on the path he had envisioned when the University was just a dream. "We will try not to list the many significant accomplishments that the University has achieved since accepting the first group of students in 1997. We want you instead to look around you. You will see the most important accomplishment of all. You, the alumni, are the pride

of AUS and its ambassadors to the world. You are the vivid proof of the success of AUS," he said. "It is often said that a great university makes an impact on the minds, dreams, and character of its students. A great university inspires its students and they in turn inspire others. The qualities of the AUS graduate are now well known in our region and beyond. We are proud of your successes and achievements at work and of your efforts to help the people around you," said Sheikh Sultan.



**“A great university also makes an impact on the world of ideas and their practical application. Your University is committed to transfer knowledge and innovations to the world beyond the boundaries of its campus. To achieve this goal, we are developing the AUS Technology Park. The park would link the research laboratories of the University with the prospective beneficiaries of the research outcomes in all fields. If you have new and creative ideas and would like to develop them into a product or innovative service, do not hesitate to contact your professors or the new associate vice chancellor for research. AUS will gladly assist you in your endeavors in every possible way,”** said His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan.

Speaking on the occasion, Chancellor Heath said, “I am very pleased to welcome our proud and wonderful alumni back to their campus. I especially want to welcome our University’s founder and president, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, who established the lofty standards and goals that guide this tremendous University in its continuous growth and development. It is indeed fitting that His Highness Sheikh Sultan was just recently named as Cultural Personality of the Year for the many cultural achievements he has undertaken in Sharjah.”

“Tonight marks a great occasion. We now have the first officially chartered Alumni Association in the UAE and one of the few in the region. This huge turnout for our Third Reunion Gala demonstrates that our association is flourishing and becoming ever-more vigorous,” Chancellor Heath continued.

Dr. Heath said that AUS needed the alumni’s continuing connection and multifaceted interaction if it was to reach the lofty goals set out for it just 13 years ago by the Sharjah Ruler. “We are already in prominent company among peer universities in the Middle East,” he said. “But we set our sights even higher. Our goal is to take AUS into the top echelon of teaching and research universities. Within the past semester alone we have been able, with the support of prominent University friends, to obtain donations to fund half a dozen chairs for distinguished professors. Due to His Highness’ great generosity, planning for a research park adjacent to campus is also well

underway. These are some of the central building blocks for building a great university that will continue to make you, our alumni, proud in future years,” he added. Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, also addressed the gathering and welcomed the alumni to the event. “I wish to express gratitude to all of you gathered here tonight. And we appreciate the great distances many of you have traveled to get here. In this sense, AUS already has considerable global reach and is the envy of many more regional schools,” she said. During her address she praised the efforts of the alumni association and listed some of its achievements as well as those of its members, including the awarding of scholarships to seven members for graduate study at AUS, holding the inaugural council meeting, participation of seven members in a leadership program at Al Maktoum Institute in Dundee, Scotland, and the commencement of an internship at the White House by one of its newer members.

Sheikh Mohammad Faisal Al Qassimi, President of the AUS Alumni Association (AUSAA), also spoke on the occasion and welcomed the alumni. He also expressed his gratitude for being allowed to represent the alumni association. “The AUS Alumni Association seems to bridge gaps and create unique connections with other institutions and individuals,” he said.

To express its deepest gratitude for his unstinting support and guidance, the AUSAA awarded its first honorary membership to His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah.







Seven winners of the AUSAA Scholarships were also announced at the event. These were:  
(Winners of the full scholarship)

- Ibrahim Jarrar – MSc EE
- Ibrahim Nassar – MSc EE
- Anas Shehada – MSc ESM
- Ali Amouri – MSc CVE

(Winners of the partial sponsorship)

- Yara Aji – Currently enrolled in ESM
- Mahmoud Lubani – Currently enrolled in ESM
- Hussam Othman – Currently enrolled in ESM

The evening also included a raffle draw, which saw four lucky alumni winning prizes. These were:

Mohammed Abdallah, Class of '09, who won a Mitsubishi car sponsored by Heavy Machinery Center;

Nadia Saleem, Class of '07 who won the Musafar.com vacation package to Istanbul;

Racha AbdulKhaleq, Class of '06, and Faseehudin Asif,



Class of '09 who won two airline tickets sponsored by Air Arabia.

The dinner was also attended by AUS Alumnus Sheikh Mohamad Bin Abdullah Al Thani, Chairman of the Sharjah Golf and Shooting Club; Dr. Amr Abdel Hamid, Advisor to His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah on Higher Education; Dr. Mufid Al Samerai, Chairman of Al Samerai Foundation; AUS Alumnus Mishal Kanoo, Deputy Chairman of the Kanoo Group; AUS Alumnus Engineer Salah Bin Omair Al Shamsi, former Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce, and the Federation of the UAE Chambers of Commerce; AUS Alumna Noura Al Nouman, Director of Her Highness Sheikha Jawaher Bint Mohammad Al Qassimi's Cabinet; AUS Alumnus Yousuf Al Bastaki, Project Director, Emal, Abu Dhabi Aluminum; Dr. Thomas Hochstettler, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Salem Al Qaseer, Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs; Dr. Moza Al Shehhi, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs; George DeBin, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration; Ali Shuhaimy, Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management; and other senior University officials and faculty members.



# His Highness' Address to AUS Alumni

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of American University of Sharjah (AUS) speech at the Third Alumni Reunion Dinner held on Thursday 21 January 2010 :

"AUS Alumni and Families, Fellow members of the AUS Community, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
We are pleased to see so many of you this evening and we extend our very warm welcome to every one of you. Alumni Dinners are wonderful opportunities to reconnect with old friends, and to make new friends. I think you call this "networking" in the language of these days. We hope you will make use of this opportunity and "network" as much as you can this evening.

Dear Alumni,

Your University is steadily continuing its progress on the path we envisioned when the University was just a dream. We will not try to list the many significant accomplishments that the University has achieved since accepting the first group of students in 1997. We want you instead to look around you. You will see the most accomplishment of all. You, the Alumni, are the pride of AUS and its ambassadors to the world. You are the vivid proof of success of AUS.

It is often said that a great university makes an impact on the minds, dreams, and character of its students.

A great university inspires its students and they in turn inspire others. The qualities of the AUS graduate are now well known in our region and beyond.

We are proud of your successes and achievements at work, and of your efforts to help the people around you.

A great university also makes an impact on the world of ideas and their practical application.



Your University is committed to transfer knowledge and innovations to the world beyond the boundaries of its campus. To achieve this goal, we are developing the AUS Technology Park. The Park would link the research laboratories of the University with the prospective beneficiaries of the research outcomes in all fields. If you have new and creative ideas and would like to develop them into a product or innovative service, do not hesitate to contact your professors... AUS will gladly assist you endeavors in every possible way.

It is also said that the Alumni of great universities are their best supporters in the long term.

"I didn't imagine that I would see more than a thousand of our graduates coming back to this platform. At that time, I was looking at it and it was empty. But now I see it full of the fruits of my vision, you, the graduates"

Thank you for coming. Enjoy the rest of the evening.



# Chancellor Heath's Address to Alumni

**"Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome home our proud alumni who are also called AUS-exes. I especially want to welcome our University's founder and president, His Highness Sheikh Sultan al Qassimi, who very much established the lofty standards by which we began this fine University and has guided our continuous growth. His Highness Sheikh Sultan was selected Cultural Personality of the Year for the many cultural achievements undertaken in Sharjah in enhancing Arab culture and heritage. We all recall that Sharjah was selected cultural capital of the Arab World in 1998.**



Tonight marks another great occasion, for we now have an officially chartered Alumni Association that is robust and ever-more vigorous, judging by the huge turn out for our Third Reunion Gala Dinner. Each of you tonight has a personal story to tell of taking classes and mastering new subject areas in courses taught in English in subjects that you may well have never heard of before. Not only that but you were probably asked by the faculty to give the reasons for a particular opinion and to defend it. You were asked to devise your own solutions to questions posed in the class. This is active and questioning learning, that is our hallmark. But now these strange sounding courses, readings and subjects are "old hat." You long ago mastered and feel quite comfortable with them now. To fast-forward a bit, you have graduated from the halls of AUS to embark on new challenges into the unchartered depths of career. And that is precisely my point tonight!

By venturing into the unknown at AUS as a student you have "learned how to learn." By so doing you have transposed the techniques and strategies that you have successfully mastered during an AUS education to take on challenges of career. You are proceeding forward where you would have never dreamt you would have dared to go. You can continue to venture forth into the unknown armed with conceptual tools from AUS to find your way, and I have every reason to believe that you will succeed. You and your professors had the audacity to believe in what you could achieve and you had the

courage to accept every challenge with the determination to follow through. AUS Alumni boast remarkable success stories.

AUS needs your continuing connection and multifaceted interaction, if we are going to reach together the lofty goals that His Highness set out for us just 13 years ago. Yes, we do continue to thrive and constantly progress. We are already in lofty company among peers in the Middle East and we have our sights set higher. Our goals are to take AUS into the top echelon of research and in teaching. Just within the past semester alone a number of chairs for distinguished professors have been designated and funded.

A research park next to the campus is also well underway. These are the central building blocks of a great university that will bring great pride to you, our alumni. It will take some time to make the top echelon outside of our region, but our foundation is solid and our achievements have been as noteworthy as they have been rapid. So please stay connected to AUS through your very dynamic Alumni Association. Your contributions of just a few dirhams each at the reunion dinner last year allowed your alumni association to fund 7 scholarships for your peers, your fellow alumni. Our collective actions can move mountains together.

Thank you for coming. Enjoy your dinner and the fine camaraderie of those around you."

# Vice Chancellor Mourtada-Sabbah Welcomes AUS Alumni

*“Your Highness, Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah, and President of the American University of Sharjah, Chancellor and Mrs. Heath, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, and especially our alumni and their families,*

*I wish to express my gratitude to all of you gathered here tonight. We appreciate the great distances many of you have traveled to get here. In this sense, AUS already has a considerable global reach and is the envy of many regional universities.*

As a start-up institution which began only 13 years ago, with the vision of a single man who thought big, we have reached in record time, standards and size to hold up the unique vision of our founder.

All of you have experienced “small” things –such as small classes, small graduation ceremonies, and small clubs. But speaking as a pioneer faculty member who was present on the very day AUS began, and looking around this evening, we certainly are not so small anymore. This is a record attendance. Your presence humbles me, and I am heartened to see the esteem that you hold for this University and for the AUS Alumni Association.

We have made great strides as a University and we have made equally great strides as an alumni organization within the past year. This has been a great start and gives us only a glimpse of what lies ahead through your efforts.

I wish that I could take credit for the smashing success of the Alumni Association, but you, my dear alumni, have gained your own momentum as a fully chartered organization with your own selected representatives and officers and are off to the “races.” In the past few months alone our Alumni Association has created its own global reach:

- The Dubai Chapter under alumnus Karim Abu Ajram’s leadership and the volunteer efforts of such proactive alumni as Fareed Abdallah, Rami Jaber, our alumni activities coordinator, Reem Al-Shaka, and Hisham Dirbas, undertook an unforgettable trip to Italy where the name of AUS flew high with pride.

- The AUS Alumni Association held its inaugural Council



Meeting a month ago (on December 17) to consider ventures near and far.

- The Eurogolfe Conference, supported by the European Commission and the Government of Kuwait, has been scheduled for March 7 in Kuwait City for AUS alumni to present talks shoulder to shoulder with prominent statesmen and leading businessmen from Europe and the GCC along with fellow alumni from the Institute of Political Studies in Paris.

- One of our newer alumni has just recently embarked as an intern to the US White House, as will be further discussed by Chancellor Heath.

- The AUS Alumni Association has also sent seven of its members to Scotland, as they were selected to represent the AUS alumni at the Leadership Program designed by the Al Maktoum Institute of Islamic Studies through the generous support of H.H. Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashed Al Maktoum.

These are all but a few examples of the AUS “CAN DO spirit!”

- By all estimates, hundreds of you will participate in the first Alumni Business Forum, which will be held at AUS on March 13. The purpose of the Forum is to have our alumni network with the firms in which other alumni are employed. This is an instance of “alumni helping alumni” in order to advance their careers. This is another example of our *raison d’etre*.

And I could go on. I have barely scratched the surface. There is simply more good news about activities and projects being planned or in the making than I could report tonight, but cannot in the interest of time. As an association we are off to a splendid start.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce your own Board members: Ms. Anita Akkawi, Vice President, Mr. Eisa Al Eisa, Executive of the Council (who conveys his apologies for not attending due to the sad demise of his mother), Mr. Firas Hammad, Treasurer, Ms. Kawthar Al Sulaimani, Executive of the Administration, Mr. Abdullah El Shazly, Director for

Institutional Advancement, and Sheikh Mohammed Al Qassimi, President of AUSAA Board.

Would Sheikh Mohammed Al Qassimi please come forward to join me at the podium.

Ladies and gentlemen, AUS alumni, I give you one of your own, AUSAA President, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Faisal Al Qassimi."

## Expression of Gratitude for His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi

On behalf of the AUS Alumni Association and the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, Vice Chancellor Mourtada presented His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, President of AUS, with the "First Honorary Membership" of the AUS Alumni Association, with the following words:

"Your Highness:

According to the Constitution of the AUS Alumni Association, the Association Board is empowered to grant an honorary membership to a distinguished figure whose contributions have rendered an extraordinary impact towards achieving our mission. Your Highness, it is the unanimous judgment of the AUS Association Founding Board that no one's contributions at any single time or conceivably into the future, make as superlative an impact on the Association that could match those of your own in advancing the goals of the Association and the University.

Therefore, the Alumni Association would like to express its deep gratitude to Your Highness for your past and ongoing support in the lengthy process of seeing the Association crystallize.

Even with your busy schedule as the Ruler of Sharjah and your multitude of official other duties, you have always made time for us, graciously honoring us with your presence at each of our three alumni reunions, and personally endorsing our Constitution with Your Highness' signature.

For this steadfast support from our inception to our present successes, would Your Highness please accept this engraved plaque bearing testimony to your being unanimously acclaimed as THE Honorary Alumnus of the American University of Sharjah."



# A Message from AUSAA President

Your Alumni Association has grown so rapidly since the day it was established that now you can say proudly that you are a graduate of a university with one of the strongest Alumni Associations in the Middle East.

I am sure by your efforts and the ODAA personnel it shall excel more, gaining respect among leaders in the education field. More plans are underway to improve the quality and you will not be disappointed. I want to thank everyone who made this happen, thank you.

*Sheikh Mohammed Al Qassimi  
(06', BA International Studies)  
AUSAA Founding Board President*



## AUS Signs MOU with Al-Maktoum Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies

AUS and Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, Dundee, United Kingdom, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), December 20 at a special ceremony held at AUS.

The agreement, which envisages the exchange of faculty and students among other important aims stipulated by the two institutions, was signed by Chancellor Heath, and His Excellency Mirza Al Sayegh, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Maktoum Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies. The MOU sees cooperation between AUS and Al-Maktoum Institute in a number of areas, including promoting the study of Islam and Muslims, multiculturalism and inter-religious dialogue through joint research and academic conferences, joint

publications of scholarly materials, working together to provide joint academic programs, and exchanging scholarly publications, prospectuses, textbooks, course syllabi, reference journals, and databases.

Seven AUS alumnae attended a four-week-long symposium held at Al-Maktoum Institute in January. This is one of two symposia organized by the institute every year. "The signing of this MOU opens up a new chapter in our relationship with Al-Maktoum Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies," said Chancellor Heath. "I hope that this agreement will strengthen this relationship and accrue mutual benefit to both institutions," he added



# AUS Alumnae Trip to Scotland With Al Maktoum Institute's Leadership Program

**On February 9, the Al-Maktoum Institute celebrated the finale of its ninth educational program in Dundee, Scotland for 36 female students from five different universities in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.**

Initially the program was launched in order to advance the students' overall learning and understanding of the challenges of global dialogue and exchange. Over the past seven years more than 300 students have taken part in this initiative.

His Excellency Mirza Al Sayegh, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Maktoum Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies, gave a speech congratulating the students upon their successful completion of the program and he hoped that their time at the Al-Maktoum Institute was "life changing."

A special dinner was also held on the evening of the ninth at which the Academic Training Program (ATP) students shared their reflections and experiences of their time in Scotland.

The ceremony was attended by Chancellor Peter Heath and Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, from the American University of Sharjah, in addition to several high ranking delegations from Zayed University, the British University in Dubai, Abu Dhabi University, Dubai Women's College, Higher Colleges of Technology, and Qatar University.

**Below are some quotes from AUS Ambassadors who went on this program:**

"Looking back at the four weeks I spent in Scotland as a part of the Leadership Program, I must say that it is an unforgettable experience that I will remember forever! Looking at the program schedule, I was really impressed that it was not all about lectures and classroom sessions, the program also gave us time for external visits (for example, the Scottish parliament, the University of Aberdeen, and others) which I believe were well prepared and very enlightening. This balance between the lectures and the cultural/ educational visits allowed time to pass quickly and we really didn't feel that we spent a month abroad!

Leadership, globalization, and multiculturalism are all topics that I am interested in and they were discussed and debated in the classroom in a professional manner. The classes on Islamic Jerusalem and Islam and human rights were very enriching to all the students and graduates."

**Reem Al Zarouni  
(Bachelor degree in Computer Engineering, 2003)**





“When I entered this program, I felt like an empty book that was waiting to be written because I knew this would be a new experience for me. I wanted to meet new young women who aimed to be future leaders, and I loved sitting in lectures where I could absorb every bit of new information. We gained insight into the Scottish culture and traditions with family visits, and the program also helped us understand multiculturalism so that we came to appreciate the differences and similarities in our society.

I advise future participants to be open-minded and willing to interact with the other universities, and be willing sometimes to take the lead and sometimes to be a team player. Who knows how many friends you’ll make, and the challenges you’ll encounter, and the experiences you’ll gain, but at the end of this period you will know what type of leader you are and what your strengths and weaknesses are.”

**Azza Al Qaseer**

**(Bachelor degree in Visual Communication; minor in Design Management, 2008)**

“The most interesting and memorable thing about ATP2010 was the time we spent with young women that we didn’t even know very well, who later became like our sisters. I chose to go on this program after reading about how it was going to teach me about leadership and multiculturalism. The main reason I wanted to participate in this course was to add to my value as a job seeker, especially since nowadays the job sphere is highly demanding. I figured that this experience of taking a course specializing in leadership is a rare advantage that not many people have. In addition to that, my work experience is in event management for different cultural groups, which requires training in leading a multicultural group.

My advice to fellow AUS alumni who might be nominated for ATP in the future is to be prepared to have a great time, learn a lot and work hard in addition to missing your families! One important fact that I learned through this ATP is that all cultures in the world have similar goals and interests, and we are all humans after all.”

**Umnia Akram**

**(Bachelor degree in Mass Communication, 2009)**

“During this program everyday brought an exciting day, we would go to sleep every night waiting for the next day full of excitement and eagerness to capture every moment of joy and learning new things about different issues, some were simple and some were complex. We were given a precious opportunity to interact with respectful scholars and important figures in the Scottish society, whether it was with high profile



leaders or regular individuals. Our experience was a unique one, full of zest and sparkling prospects that has helped expand our future outlook in terms of our societies and careers as future leaders. So many memories are embedded in our minds for a life time. We have explored ourselves in a new locale, detached from how we viewed ourselves in the past years. We drew a new picture of ourselves that is positive and so energetic in a sense.”

**Deema Mutawa**

**(Bachelor degree in International Studies, 2009)**





“The lectures on the main topics were very informative and beneficial. Intense arguments during the lectures helped us see every issue from different perspectives. The interaction between the students and the lecturers helped to keep us interested and engaged throughout the classes. The cultural part of the program and the visits were even more interesting. I truly enjoyed the balance between the classes and different visits that were arranged. We got to meet Scottish people in their homes and share with them part of their culture and traditions; we got to practice Scottish dances and engage with Scottish women. We got to visit different universities and attend interesting workshops. We got to attend a debate

session in the Debate Chamber at the Parliament. All of these activities were exciting experiences; ones that I will always remember and cherish.”

**Nada Taryam**  
**(Bachelor degree in Architecture, 2008)**

“The most interesting and memorable thing about ATP2010 was the experience of travelling abroad to learn. Being focused on controversial topics such as multiculturalism, globalization and leadership for one month, while living in Scotland, enriched my knowledge. As a media professional, being exposed to media in the UK and Scotland enhanced my critical thinking skills and extended my horizons when it comes to having a multicultural globalized media. I advise my fellow AUS alumni, who might be nominated for ATP in future, to benefit from every moment in Scotland, in learning about their fields and networking with professionals in the UK. If I am to mention one important fact that I learned through the ATP, it is that the West (represented by the UK and Scotland) knows a lot about us. They build their knowledge about us in documentaries. However, they were enlightened enough to ask us about our local issues such as the effect of the financial crisis on Dubai. In short, the knowledge we gained in Scotland was exchanged in the sense that we conveyed messages about our country and culture as they did.”

**Wafa Khalfan Bu-Rungain**  
**(Bachelor degree in Computer Science / Mass Communication, 2007)**

“I would describe the Al-Maktoum Training Program (ATP2010) as an enlightening and career developing program and a wonderful experience to have. I enjoyed my stay in Dundee city and all the topics that were introduced in the program. We learned about Islamic Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis / Jerusalem) as a model of multiculturalism and how it is considered a holy land for the three religions, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. We also learned about management across cultures, leadership, multiculturalism, globalization, law, human rights and Islam. In leadership sessions I enjoyed the SDI exercise (Strength Deployment Inventory) and I found that I am a thinker leader. I also enjoyed the visits to Edinburgh National Gallery, Edinburgh College of Art, and Aberdeen University. I had the chance to meet students from different universities and colleges in the UAE and Scotland. All in all, ATP2010 is a great experience to have and I recommend it to AUS alumnae and current students.”

**Amira Ballaith**  
**(Bachelor degree in Computer Science, 2004)**

# Sharjah Islamic Bank Center for Islamic Banking and Finance To Be Set Up at AUS with an AED 30 Million Endowment

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between AUS and Sharjah Islamic Bank (SIB) at a special ceremony held February 2nd at AUS will lead to a center for Islamic banking and finance being established at the University as a result of an AED 30 million endowment given by Sharjah Islamic Bank. The Center will be based in the School of Business and Management. The Sharjah Islamic Bank Center for Islamic Banking and Finance (SIBCIBF) is envisaged as a center of excellence that will serve as a focal point for instruction, research, and outreach activities both regionally and internationally

Mohammed Abdallah, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Sharjah Islamic Bank, who spoke at the signing indicated that the establishment of the Center will contribute to enriching education and research at AUS as envisioned by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah. Furthermore, the Center aims to conduct academic research in the field of Islamic banking and finance as well as cater to the increasing demands of the marketplace for qualified graduates in this field.

Mr. Abdallah also said that the Center “will focus on the training and equipping of human resources and will focus on studies and research through new programs that will contribute in providing qualified personnel to the banking sector.”

Chancellor Heath stated, “This endowed Center indicates the Sharjah Islamic Bank’s commitment to exposing students to banking and finance based on Sharia principles.” He added that “generations of students will benefit from the new educational Center, which will help strengthen our students’ ability to meet the challenges of tomorrow while retaining the core values and practices of Islamic finance. Students and professors at AUS will be able to contribute significant research on the continued growth and advantages of Islamic banking.”

The SIBCIBF will develop and advance research in Islamic business studies and Islamic financial products and services. The Center will support numerous academic activities, including the establishment

and support of the Sharjah Islamic Bank Professor of Islamic Banking and Finance position, the scholar-in-residence program, research fellowships, graduate student assistantships, undergraduate student fellowships, conferences, and research grants, among others. Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Vice Chancellor of Development and Alumni Affairs, thanked the Sharjah Islamic Bank, “for their generous donation and their far-sightedness to partner with higher education to enrich our programs and benefit the community. This will make available culturally appropriate solutions for Gulf society in the future.”

Dr. Malcolm Richards, Dean of SBM, stated, “the School of Business and Management is honored to be the beneficiary of Sharjah Islamic Bank’s generosity, as evidenced by their creation of this important Center. We are committed to excellence in the programs of the Center as we work to help us all better understand Islamic banking and the workings of an Islamic bank.” Undergraduate courses in Islamic economics, Islamic banking and finance, and Islamic finance have been taught at the University for the past five years, with a new Islamic accounting course scheduled to be offered in Fall 2010.

A minor in Islamic finance at the undergraduate level is also under consideration by the Department of Accounting and Finance, along with an MBA concentration in Islamic banking and finance.



# Expanding the Frontier of Industry

## AUSAA Council Member H.E. Alumnus Yousuf Al Bastaki

*Q: Can you tell us briefly what is the significance of the new EMAL smelter in Taweelah, which is situated halfway between Abu Dhabi and Dubai?*

The EMAL project is the largest industrialisation project in the UAE outside of the oil and gas sector and a cornerstone of the country's diversification strategy.

EMAL is a joint venture (JV) between Dubai Aluminium Company Limited (DUBAL) and Mubadala Development Company (Mubadala) and was established in February 2007 to construct what will become the world's largest single site aluminium smelter complex.

For us the key challenge is to construct the project, prioritizing work place safety and minimised environmental impact, while being on schedule and on budget.

From the outset we have designed and are constructing the most environmentally friendly smelter possible utilizing the latest technologies and applications of best practices. We believe we could demonstrate that it is possible to produce a high quality product at competitive prices and still manage to be environmentally and socially responsible.

*Q: Please describe your involvement with AUS and how your education allowed you to help create a major aluminium facility in the Gulf?*

I did my Executive MBA at AUS and I am very proud of being one of its Alumni. From a professional point of view, I have worked very closely with AUS colleagues of engineering in a few initiatives that served in promoting the engineering profession and helped in advancing engineering technology like the Mechatronics Conference. I was also fortunate to have my son, Mohammad, accepted in AUS and who graduated last year from CAS with a BA in International Studies. I am now in the process of preparing the paper work to apply and enrol my second son, Abdulla, in the college of engineering.

At EMAL, we had a couple of involvements with AUS. One was supporting the "The International Symposium on Mechatronics and Applications (ISMA09)" and the second was when I personally addressed AUS graduates at an Alumni Iftar, where I specifically mentioned that this venture should be of great interest for any graduate who wants to be a part of the largest diversification project being undertaken in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. The skills that they will learn, the challenges they will face and the opportunities they will be presented with will be unlike any thing other peers will experience in the engineering field.

*Q: It is said that success can be assessed in by meeting production schedules efficiently and effectively. How has EMAL fared?*

EMAL's definition of success is based on the following:

1. Safety: finishing the project without compromising the safety of the employees and workers.
2. Environment: making sure we use the best available technologies, in order to preserve the environment, and that all work that is done, is done with the least environmental impacts.
3. And third, is meeting the production schedule efficiently



and effectively. And here at EMAL, we were able to achieve the three on budget and before schedule, which is due to a dedicated team that shares common goals and vision.

*Q: How was EMAL financed in the current climate an austere worldwide credit crunch?*

Fortunately, Emal did not have any difficulties in securing the funds through project finance due to its credibility and long term business viability. In fact, the crisis that has been happening had an actual positive impact on us, considering we are still in the construction phase. When we started with the project, we faced several problems in finding the right suppliers and on time delivery of equipment.

However as the crisis started, unexpectedly it helped us in getting the right equipment on time and many competitive suppliers which contributed to assist the project to have a start up for operations ahead of schedule and on budget.

Also, the market always fluctuates, and as we can see now the market is starting to recover, and we are still not yet in full production. We expect by the time we are, early 2011, the market would have recovered, if not at least in the aluminium sector. The project has been planned on the basis of a long-term business model that is expected to produce a strong return for EMAL's shareholders.

*Q: Your connection with the AUS Alumni Association is doubly significant because you are the first two-generation family during the thirteen-year history of AUS. This final question is directed to your son, Mohammad Bastaki. Mohammad, how is it that you came to attend AUS?*

I have seen my father's pride at graduating from a reputable university such as AUS and being an Alumni member. His view of AUS encouraged me to enrol at this specific university and I believe I have made the right decision.

*Q: Would you offer the advice that your father gave you to others who are seeking a university to pursue their education?*

I can say that I share my father's pride in attending AUS.

# The Emirates Investments Group Pioneer Scholarship Fund

H.E. Sheikh Tariq Bin Faisal Al Qassimi, Chairman of Emirates Investments Group, has made a highly valued contribution one million dirham to the AUS Endowment Fund; this valued contribution will establish “The Emirates Investments Group Pioneer Scholarship Fund” at AUS. These funds will provide opportunities for talented students with financial need to avail themselves of an AUS education.



“The Emirates Investments Group Pioneer Scholarship Fund” will be matched by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of American University of Sharjah (AUS) and donations made by private contributors to create scholarships for students who excel at their academic pursuits and are in need of financial assistance.

Chancellor Peter Heath and VCDA Nada Mourtada-Sabbah expressed their gratitude to H.E. Sheikh Tariq Bin Faisal Al Qassimi for his generous donation. Dr. Peter Heath remarked that it is vital to build a partnership with the AUS wider community as demonstrated by H.E. Sheikh Tariq Bin Faisal Al Qassimi. Together, we can offer more deserving students a high standard of education which will benefit the work force in UAE.



## Petrofac Research Chair in Renewable Energy Established at AUS

AUS announced the establishment of the Petrofac Research Chair in Renewable Energy as a result of a AED 15 million donation by Petrofac, the international oil and gas facilities service provider. This generous donation will fund the position which will see a progressive research program in renewable energy, bringing together the University's most talented resources.

"The Renewable Energy Research Program will bring physicists and chemists from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) together with engineers from the College of Engineering (CEN) to design and build alternative power facilities. The holder of the Petrofac Research Chair will contribute to the necessary critical mass of researchers and resources to enable the private sector in the Northern Emirates to become a leader in 'green' energy technologies," said AUS Chancellor, Dr. Peter Heath.

Maroun Semaan, Petrofac's Group Chief Operating Officer and AUS Trustee, said that this was a significant next step towards developing alternative energy technologies. "The inaugural holder of the chair will be crucial to the direction we follow and, as such, securing the right candidate will be vital. Funding a dedicated resource will enable pioneering renewable energy research to be undertaken in the region and will undoubtedly facilitate progress alongside the already well established oil and gas sector." Headed by Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs is responsible for



endowing chairs and professorships at AUS. "Students who wish to have a practical education in renewable energy will come to AUS to become part of this exciting new industry," said Mourtada-Sabbah. "The scientist soon to hold the Petrofac Research Chair will be an internationally renowned innovator in this field, an area which gathers greater importance with each passing year," she added.

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## Architecture Alumni Project Wins at Middle East Architect Awards

Two graduates of the architecture program in SA&D were declared winners of the 2009 Best Mixed-Use Project at the Middle East Architect Awards held in Dubai.

Ahmed Ebrahim and Farid Esmaeil, graduates of the Class of 2003 and founding-partners of X-Architects, were behind the winning project "Xeritown" an urban complex designed to work in harmony with the landscape and natural environment of the UAE. "We feel the reception of this award is a triumph for regional architecture, and we are confident that it will encourage us further in expanding

the boundaries of local contemporary design and architecture," they said. "Xeritown is a brilliant design by Dubai-based X-Architects. This dynamic firm surged ahead of various multinational firms in the mixed-use development category," said Jeff Roberts, from Construction Week Magazine organizer of the event.

This award is granted to the projects that demonstrate the most sensitive approach to climate and sustainability in architectural design and planning.

# The First AUSAA Council Meeting

On December 17, 2009 the AUS Alumni Council members held their inaugural annual meeting at AUS. As the first Alumni Council to be seated, this meeting was very important in establishing the Council's vision and mission, both of which involve the alumni body. Chancellor Peter Heath, VCDA Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, and Mr. Abdullah El Shazly, Director for Institutional Advancement, welcomed the Council members and expressed their appreciation to all the members who assisted in developing this alumni organization. A major part of the meeting was spent discussing the Alumni Chapter activities, methods of communication among the members, and ways to enhance the AUS Alumni organization. On behalf of the AUSAA Founding Board, AUS Alumnus ('05) Eisa Al Ali, the External Relations Member of the Board, spoke to the Council members and discussed the Council's agenda for future action. He also stressed, as part of the Council's agenda, the importance of encouraging the rest of the alumni body to become active members.



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## Back to AUS

It is my pleasure to write to you for the first time as the Director for Institutional Advancement. I accepted this position after a lot of consideration and deep thinking about my future. Prior to joining AUS I had a well established and stable career in IT as the Director of IT at the Atlantis the Palm Hotel in Dubai. However, when I heard about this position, I felt the eagerness and responsibility to serve our University as a whole. I cannot lie; it was not an easy choice. I have always dealt with machines, computers, switches, and routers, and was able to expect what caused a problem or how to fix it. But now I am dealing with people. This is definitely not an easy job as I can never expect what people's reactions will be. It is very hard to please everyone; however, one of my major responsibilities is to help connect our AUS Alumni back to their alma mater. I will do so with the highest standards of customer service and professionalism. In addition, I am the liaison between AUS and its Alumni, and in this capacity I take your requests and try to turn them into actions here at AUS.

All of this will require some changes to be undertaken at AUS and in the minds of the Alumni. Furthermore, change is already happening, as you can see, and this is



because of all your efforts and we will always need those. My job is to make this process faster, easier, and smoother. AUS Alumni should be proud of being an essential part of AUS, and our job at AUS is to welcome you back to your second home.

*AUS Alumnus '03' Abdullah El Shazly  
Director for Institutional Advancement*

## AUS Alumni Undertake Exciting Trip to Italy

Twenty members of the Dubai chapter of the AUS Alumni Association participated in an exciting trip to Italy, home to over 40 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Organized as part of the chapter's annual activities during the recent Eid Al Adha holidays, the objectives of the trip were to renew bonds of friendship and to create powerful shared experiences among fellow alumni.

The alumni and their friends who undertook this trip toured ancient Rome, Vatican City, and the Island of Capri, which provided them with an opportunity to learn more about Italy's rich history and culture. The AUS alumni team's visit also included historically important sites such as the Roman Coliseum, the Pantheon, the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican Museum, and St. Peter's Basilica amongst others. Making the

most of their trip, some alumni also visited Florence, Venice, and Pisa by train in order to see more of this beautiful country.

Upon their return, the alumni expressed satisfaction with the trip and vowed to participate in future activities organized by the chapter. "It was a truly amazing experience for me. Thanks to the fellow alumni organizers who spent weeks preparing for this trip and making it so memorable," said alumna Yara Aji, Class of 2006. "I am eagerly looking forward to the next trip to be organized by the Dubai chapter. I sincerely believe that all alumni should try their best to attend the chapter's future activities."

Responding to the needs of their members, the Dubai chapter of the AUS Alumni Association has pledged to organize more activities, both local and international.



# “I Was Blessed With a Son and Aspire For Him To Follow in My Footsteps...”

His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulla Al Thani, Managing Director Sharjah Golf and Shooting Club, Managing Director of Grab 'n Go Food Outlet, Chairman of EM Holdings – Musafir.com

*Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines (this is a free “space” including hobbies and anything else you would like to share about yourself)?*

My objectives are to create a manageable and sustainable future for all our companies' business interests. Likewise, realize an everlasting impression with my partners, colleagues and clients interests to develop structured enterprises for our future generations to come. My focus points will be generated and driven by all the people in my daily life that I will be in contact with, henceforth “we will succeed”.

I like to keep fit with daily fitness programs; I feel that a healthy body creates a healthy mind. Last but not least... I have a passion for photography.

Sanguine – This word best describes me, it means cheerfully optimistic.

“I was blessed with a son and aspire for him to follow in my footsteps...”

*What is the title of your current position and what are your current responsibilities? A little more broadly, what does a typical work day schedule look like?*

Managing Director Sharjah Golf and Shooting Club  
Managing Director of Grab 'n Go Food Outlet  
Chairman of EM Holdings – Musafir.com

“Musafir.com is incorporated under Universal Tourism, an IATA accredited Travel Company and was founded by Sachin Gadoya and Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulla Al Thani in 2005, both graduates from AUS.

It is a travel website that will allow travelers from the UAE to compare flights to over 3,000 (Three Thousand) designations around the world on leading airlines AND to book them online in seconds.”

Musafir (pronounced moo-saa-fir) means “traveler” in several regional languages, including Arabic, Farsi, Hindi, and Urdu. The venture was founded



in August 2007 by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah Al Thani, Sachin Gadoya, and Albert Dias, with the aim of making booking travel from the UAE just as easy as it has been in the rest of the world for a number of years now. “We live by three promises to our travelers in everything we do”, said the founders, when asked about what makes Musafir.com different from other travel websites in the region. “Great choice, no-nonsense convenience and a premium experience.” The company also offers a Travel Expert service for travelers who would like to customize their trips over the telephone and a Travel Smart guide with tips for travel enthusiasts.

Online travel bookings are expected to account for over 30 percent of the UAE's outbound leisure travel market by 2012, with e-ticketing and the zero-commission model in particular being credited for the recent impetus. Musafir.com plans to offer a number of new services in 2010, including hotel reservations and sightseeing tours, to meet the growing demand. The company is investing AED 3 million in the development of a proprietary trip planning solution over the next two years to make planning holidays from the UAE easier than anywhere else in the region today.

I would regard myself as an early bird, getting to work before 8 a.m. I then get started writing my daily schedule of what I need to follow-up on from my previous day. For example, currently we have construction on going in several areas, including: the Conference and Banqueting Hall, a new restaurant, and the male and female spas); thus, I need to follow-up on the progress reports. Typically at 10 a.m. I attend the first daily management scheduling meeting to underline all spheres of the club which entails marketing, current membership, growth, catering, etc.

At 1 p.m. I would enjoy lunch at our restaurant as I have a natural love of food. Instinctively, I also like to get my hardhat and safety shoes on to visit the construction site, as part of my daily schedule. After 3 p.m. I have director meetings with some of my other affiliated companies and board meetings. I sometimes visit our group of companies other branches during the late afternoon. Last but not least..... I will have a good work out at the gym.

*In a few words, how would you describe the value that your AUS Masters Degree has brought you in general and to accomplishing the goals in your current position? You might describe how you would have looked at a particular topic before and after study at AUS. What role do you see AUS playing in the UAE as the University adds more graduate programs and possibly some doctoral level degree courses of study?*

In the ever changing worldwide economic and political climate we face everyday; the structured AUS MBA prepares you for managing fast track changes with an increasing awareness of how to "manage change".

## Follow your aspirations with passion and always be proud of your education!

My AUS degrees enabled me to join in a venture with two other AUS graduates and it has opened many doors and avenues allowing me to meet with people from different countries. An AUS degree will enable you to understand and deal with business development and judge situations in a professional manner.

If it is in our power to lead our future students and to guide them in making the right choices from an early age in life, by helping them understand what their education will bring them, then AUS will flourish with intellectualism.

*What is your motto in life?*

One Body, Respect It  
One Mind, Feed It  
One Life, Rock It

*What advice you would like to give to fellow AUS alumni?*

Follow your aspirations with passion and always be proud of your education!

*What advice would you give to current AUS undergraduate and/or graduate students?*

100% persistence will make you succeed in your goals!

*If you were to recommend an AUS education to other members of your community that would be because .....*

One receives open mindedness about all modern cultures.  
You will obtain a higher level of education in the UAE.

# Board of Trustees Thanks Sharjah Ruler for Bestowing Ownership of Land upon which AUS Stands

**His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of AUS, chaired, the meeting of the University's Board of Trustees in London on November 15. Chancellor Heath said that His Highness expressed satisfaction at the progress made by the University.**

Dr. Heath said that the board passed a resolution in appreciation of the Sharjah Ruler's generous and continuing support to the University, especially his magnanimous grant of ownership of the land upon which it stands within its recognized borders. The board also thanked His Highness for supporting the construction of the second module of the new School of Business and Management (SBM) building, scheduled to open in Fall 2011, and for an additional women's dormitory and a men's dormitory.

The Chancellor said that the board also extended its appreciation to Mr. Hamid D. Jafar, member of the Board of Trustees and Chairman of Crescent Petroleum, for his company's generous contribution to the new SBM building, which has enabled the University to commence construction of the building in a timely fashion. The board also announced that Mr. Riad T. Sadek, Chairman of Al Habtoor Leighton Group, had agreed to become chair of the Resource Development Committee and to serve, along with Mr. Hamid D. Jafar, as co-chair to lead the current AUS resource development efforts.

The board reviewed various issues pertaining to the University's strategic planning, the branding strategy currently underway, as well as plans for further development of AUS. The board also approved the Finance Committee's recommendation of an adjustment of undergraduate tuition fees for the academic year 2010-2011.

Dr. Heath noted that the board passed several resolutions thanking individuals and organizations that recently have made generous donations to AUS. Those thanked and the special funds they have established are as follows:

- Mr. Khalaf Ahmed Al Habtoor, Chairman of Al Habtoor Group of Companies: the Khalaf Ahmed Al Habtoor Chair in International Relations.
- Mr. Riad T. Sadek, member of the AUS Board of Trustees and Chairman of Al Habtoor Leighton Group: the Riad T. Sadek Chair in Civil Engineering.
- Petrofac International Ltd., through the auspices of Mr. Maroun A. Semaan, President and CEO of Petrofac and member of the AUS Board of Trustees: the Petrofac Research Chair in Renewable Energy.
- Mr. Wasfi A. Ataya, President and CEO of Sun Engineering and Contracting Company: the Wasfi A. Ataya Professorship of Mechanical Engineering.
- Mr. Amjad Al Dwaik, Mr. Ayman Al Dwaik, Ms. Areej Al Dwaik and Ms. Lina Al Dwaik: the Yusri Al Dwaik Pioneer Scholarship Fund, named in honor of their late father.
- Mr. Hussain Al Sajwani, Chairman of DAMAC: the DAMAC Pioneer Scholarship Fund.
- Sheikh Tariq Bin Faisal Al Qassimi, Chairman of Emirates Investment Group: the Emirates Investments Group Pioneer Scholarship Fund.
- Mr. Faisal Rasoul, Chairman of Haseeb Rasoul Group: the Haseeb Rasoul Pioneer Scholarship Fund.



Front row: His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi  
From left to right (front row): Baroness Onora O'Neil of Bengarve, Professor Lord Alec Broers, His Highness, Dr. Cornelius Kerwin, Dr. Ali Abdullah Al Shamlan, Dr. MaryAnn Beanninger.  
From left to right (back row): Dr. Peter Heath, Mr. Hamid D. Jafar, Mr. Abdul Jalil Yousuf Darwish, Mr. Joseph L. Brand, Mr. Riad T. Sadek, Dr. Leroy S. Fletcher, Mr. Maroun A. Semaan, Dr. Roderick S. French, Dr. Anthony G. Coates

# Sharjah Ruler Attends ATHAR Course Ceremony at AUS



His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah, attended a special ceremony at AUS on January 14, marking the conclusion of a two-week course entitled ATHAR: Documentation of Heritage Sites in the Arab Region, organized by the International Center for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). The Sharjah Ruler distributed certificates to all the successful delegates who completed the course. The ceremony was also attended by His Excellency Sheikh Abdullah Bin Salem Al Qassimi, Deputy Ruler of Sharjah. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Mufid Samarai, the local course coordinator, said that whereas in most countries conservation and preservation of historic buildings and sites is treated unfairly, this is not the case in Sharjah due primarily to the presence of a visionary leader like His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan. "The vision to establish the ATHAR program has led to participants from around the region visiting Sharjah and falling in love with it and its heritage as well as the vision of its ruler," he said. The course was aimed at enhancing applied knowledge of architectural records, inventories, and information

systems for conservation in the Arab region, explained Dr. Zaki Aslan, Program Manager, ATHAR. The course also provided "a basic understanding of how to make and manage documentation, and to make informed decisions that ensure the protection of cultural heritage sites." Study visits and applied work on site at Ed-Dur in Umm Al Quwain complemented the work carried out in the classroom.

"Site managers, archaeologists, architects, engineers and planners from a dozen countries including Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Oman, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Iran participated in the course," Dr. Aslan added. Experts from Egypt, France, Italy, Jordan and Spain taught the course.

The course was held in partnership with AUS as well as the Government of Sharjah, the Sharjah Department of Information and Culture, the Sharjah Museums Department and the University of Sharjah, with the support of the Directorate General of Development Cooperation, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGCS), the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and ALECSO (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization).

## Mass Communications Graduate Goes to the White House

Tahmina Mehdi, a recent graduate of AUS, was selected for a spring internship at the White House in Washington, DC.

This is the first time that an AUS graduate or a resident of the UAE has been offered this prestigious internship, which involves competing against hundreds of American citizens across the globe.

Tahmina, who known as "Tammy" to her friends, is the daughter of Dr. Haider Mehdi, adjunct professor, and Laurial Mehdi, Associate Director of the Intensive English Program (IEP) at AUS. Tahmina graduated in June 2009 with a degree in mass communication and a concentration in journalism. She worked as a student worker in the IEP for two years, completed a summer internship at *Gulf News* as a university requirement, and had an additional internship at Flip Media following graduation.

Chancellor Peter Heath has called Tahmina's achievement "history making" and a matter of utmost pride for the University. He said, "Tahmina's selection for this position has established the unique and outstanding educational credentials of this university. Everyone at AUS, both students and faculty, are rightfully proud of Tahmina's achievement and congratulate her."

Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Vice Chancellor for

Development and Alumni Affairs, expressed great pride in AUS graduates and their continuous distinguished achievements. "It is particularly rewarding to witness the growing ties between AUS graduates and the community, as active members of their society. These increasingly strong bonds are one of the chief objectives of the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, and the recognition of our graduates is but one testimony to the vision of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Ruler of Sharjah and Member of the UAE Supreme Council, for our alumni to be AUS's ambassadors in the UAE, the region and across the world."

"I am so excited about going to the White House," Tahmina said. "I hope I get to meet President Obama and his family but my first priority is to learn from this opportunity. I am determined to do my best, and I'm looking forward to learning from those at the White House so I can expand my horizons and polish my skills to the best of my abilities." After completing her White House internship, Tahmina plans to attend graduate school in Washington, DC. She wishes to thank her parents for their guidance, her two sisters for their support, her friends for always encouraging her to take on challenges, and AUS for preparing her academically.

# Sharjah Ruler Praises AUS' Reputation

AUS has succeeded in achieving and maintaining a reputation for excellence as evidenced from the remarks of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, said during the Fall 2009 commencement ceremony on December 30, at University City Hall.

The Sharjah Ruler made these remarks while addressing the Fall 2009 commencement ceremony on December 30, at University City Hall.

His Highness congratulated the members of the Fall Class of 2009 on their success and expressed pride and satisfaction at how AUS has evolved into an internationally recognized center of excellence. "One of the most important aims a university aspires toward is to achieve and maintain a reputation for excellence. Our success in reaching this goal is evident from the many international academic and extracurricular awards won by our students as well as our faculty members last year," said His Highness in his address. "In addition, an increasing number of our graduates got accepted to some of the world's top universities to pursue further education, once again proving that our academic standards are second to none. This is also reflected in the fact that an increasing number of distinguished high school students from around the region are choosing AUS to pursue their degrees," he added.

"Another gauge of our success this past year has been the development of the relationship between the University and its alumni," His Highness noted. "The successful completion of the rules and legislation regulating this relationship, the election of the alumni council and the launch of alumni branches in cities both within and outside the UAE have set a solid

foundation for this bond between the University and its alumni to prosper and grow."

Sheikh Dr. Sultan said that the University is committed to building on its success as a pioneering academic center of higher education. "One of the most significant factors in the next stage of our development is our commitment toward establishing the AUS Technology Park in accordance with the highest international standards," he said. "It is our sincere hope and belief that your University will become a pioneering institution for research in the region, just as it has become a pioneering institution for higher education," said His Highness.



# ntation for Academic Excellence

om the numerous international awards won by its students and faculty members this past year, Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and Founder and President of the University

The Sharjah Ruler also advised the graduates to become the best ambassadors of their University, no matter where they reside. "I urge you to always hold fast to the values of peace, tolerance, love, understanding, and cultural interaction that you practiced during your years here. I can promise you that your University will always be a source of strength and support for you," he concluded.

Chancellor Heath also congratulated the graduates on their achievements and reminded them that this special moment will remain a high point of their lives. He said that this was also a time of reflection and for them to learn from their years at AUS. "I hope

that as you leave AUS, you have learned this lesson: that one must constantly seek to improve. You are now entering the adult world. This is a time when you begin to assume responsibility for yourselves and for the world in which we all live.

You have many choices to make in the coming years. I and all at AUS hold onto one hope: that as you make your choices, and as you form and fashion your lives in the years to come, you hold tightly to the ideal that it is your role and your responsibility to improve not only the quality of your own lives, but also the lives of those around you, and of the society as a whole in which we all live," he said.

Dr. Heath further noted that at this moment in history, we have almost unlimited opportunities. "Compared to almost any other time in human history, we are overall richer and more capable than at any time in the past. It is true that we face many problems and challenges on earth. Yet it is also true that almost all of the solutions to these problems lie in our own hands. We can decide to make things better or to let things get worse. No matter what happens, however, the responsibility of our choices will rest on our own shoulders. It is our duty to be wise in our choices and to make decisions that improve the quality of our lives and of the generations that follow us," he added.





The breakdown of the graduates is as follows:

« Total number of graduating students: 476

« Number of undergraduate students receiving degrees: 438

« Number of graduate students receiving degrees: 38

« Number of male graduate and undergraduates students: 275

« Number of female graduate and undergraduates students: 201

« Total number of UAE nationals: 96

A breakdown of the graduating class by school/college is as follows:

1. College of Arts and Sciences: (61 undergraduate and 10 graduate)

2. College of Engineering: (194 undergraduate and 8 graduate)

3. School of Architecture and Design: (17 undergraduate and 4 graduate)

4. School of Business and Management: (166 undergraduate and 16 graduate)

AUS Alumna Nour Al Nuaimi, the Fall Class of 2009's designated speaker at the ceremony, welcomed the guests on behalf of the graduates. She said that as a graduate of AUS, she and members of the Fall Class of 2009 should not consider themselves only in terms of a certain nationality, race, or gender. "Today, AUS graduates, we are graduating as citizens of the



world. With the knowledge and experience symbolized by the degree we are receiving comes the power of having the ability and wisdom to promote change," she said. "With the current turbulent world situation and with events such as the unprecedented global financial crisis, the swine flu pandemic, wars in various places in the world and contemporary social illnesses, a change is essential. Know that each of our individual, seemingly insignificant actions does affect the world in a certain way," she added.

"Being global citizens is not an easy task as it requires constant self-management and a strong inner will. We should be the epitome of honesty and diligence in our future careers and further studies by performing each task with the uttermost integrity and avoiding fraud," she noted. "We should also remain as the tolerant individuals we are and assess people based only on their character and merit, not based on their color or gender. While being patriotic world citizens, we must hold on to our beliefs, values, and traditions regardless of the circumstances we are challenged with. Ultimately, we should and we will excel in our careers, studies and lives for ourselves and our families, for our countries, and most importantly, for our great nation: the world as a whole," she concluded.



# The Alumni Iftar a



Over the past two years the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs has organized a series of Alumni Iftars and seminars during the holy month of Ramadan that partnered the American University of Sharjah with various firms from leading industries within the Gulf region. The intent of the Iftar Series is to continue to build a mutually beneficial relationship between AUS graduates, their fellow alumni, and employers in their fields.

The Alumni Iftar series has been hosted by the AUS Chancellor, Peter Heath, in conjunction with prominent figures in business and industry. Keynote speakers for the Iftar Series



# nd Seminar Series

have included: AUS Trustee Riad T. Sadik, the Chairman of Al Habtoor Leighton Group; Mr. Yousuf A. Bastaki, the Project Director at Emirates Aluminum; Mr. G. Ramakrishnan, the Executive Vice President and Head of Special Projects - Sharjah Islamic Bank; H.E. Ahmed Al Midfa, the Chairman of Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Expo Centre Sharjah; H.E. Hussain Al Mahmoudi, Director General of the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Rashid Al Jarwan, Executive Director of Dana Gas PJSC; and Mr. Mishal Kanoo, the Deputy Chairman of the Kanoo Group.







# The Hard Work and Sacrifices of the Early Years Must Never be Forgotten, Says Prominent Emirati Intellectual

It is vital to remember the hard work, unity, and commitment of leaders in the early years of the United Arab Emirates, said one of the country's prominent intellectuals at a special lecture held on December 20, at AUS. "We must always remember the extraordinary sacrifices and tireless efforts of the rulers as well as the people in the years prior to and right after independence," said His Excellency Mirza Al Sayegh, Investment Advisor in the Government of Dubai to His Highness Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai and Minister of Finance, during a lecture entitled "The Formation of the UAE Federation," held as part of the Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture Series at AUS. "The youth today have access to such wonderful facilities and opportunities and are fortunate to be reaping the benefits of the long-term vision set in place then," said Mr. Al Sayegh.

The engaging presentation drew a capacity audience and was attended by Dr. Peter Heath, Chancellor of AUS, Dr. Thomas Hochstettler, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and other senior University officials, faculty members, students, and members of the public. The lecture, which was organized by the AUS Office of Development and Alumni Affairs (ODAA) in conjunction with the Department of International Studies of CAS, provided a broad look at the many historical, international, and local factors at play in the region. Mr. Al Sayegh recounted the presence and influence of colonial powers such as the British and the Portuguese in the region. He also spoke about the power and well-deserved maritime reputation of the Al Qassimi fleet in the region.

He emphasized the tremendous role played by the rulers, together as a group, and in their individual capacities to bring about the success we see today. He praised Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah, for his unique vision. "Sheikh Sultan is rightly considered the doyen of statesmanship as well as for the cultural standing enjoyed by the UAE throughout the region," he noted.

Mr. Al Sayegh said that the rulers of the region had enjoyed long historical relations even during the time of the British as there was an informal union as the Trucial States. After the announcement that the British forces would withdraw from the region, nine gulf rulers met to consult and decide on the future course of action. There had always been cooperation and consultation between the gulf rulers, even prior to achieving independence, he said. Throughout the lecture, Mr. Al Sayegh recounted personal incidents in which his interaction with various key figures such as Sheikh Rashid Bin Saeed Al Maktoum highlighted their dedication and commitment to the cause of development not only for their respective emirates but the entire country. He said that the path envisaged by the



rulers upon which the new country was to embark was a common one. Individual rulers worked toward their goals in synch with the common destiny of the country. The vision for Dubai as a premier trading center is not new, he said, as can be evidenced from the history of the emirate. Sheikh Rashid had worked tirelessly for years prior to independence toward the development of the city's infrastructure. Mr. Al Sayegh has enjoyed a distinguished career in diplomacy and foreign service. His diplomatic career began in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs soon after independence of the UAE. He served as the First Secretary of the UAE Embassy in India, as well as Head of the UAE Consular Mission in Mumbai. Subsequently, he was Charge d'Affairs of the UAE Embassy in the UK, and also represented the UAE on the Political Committee of the United National General Assembly.

Since 1983, Mr. Al Sayegh has been in charge of investment affairs for His Highness Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum of the Government of Dubai. He also has a deep interest in education, having served on the boards/councils of Zayed University, British University in Dubai, Fujairah College and the Al Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Dundee, Scotland. Mr. Al Sayegh has a passion for horse racing and serves as a director of four horse farms in the UK and USA.

# Alumni Voices from Masdar

## **Ashraf Hasania, BS Civil Engineering (AUS, 2008)**

*1. Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines (this is a free “space” including hobbies and anything else you would like to share about yourself?*

My Name is Ashraf Hasania, and I graduated from AUS in fall 2008 as a civil engineer. Currently I’m doing an MSc in water and environmental engineering at Masdar Institute of Science and Technology (MIST). In addition, I’m working on my thesis which is about enhancing the performance of demisters in multi stage flash desalination systems. My hobbies are playing football, swimming, weight lifting, going out with friends, and watching movies and series.

*2. What is the title of your current position and what are your current responsibilities? A little more broadly, what does a typical work day schedule look like?*

My title is graduate student, and my current responsibilities are fulfilling course and research requirements and looking after sports and students activities since I was elected as a member of the current student council. Weekly, I have meetings with my research advisor, I attend two classes for each of my three courses (1.5 hrs/ class), and we have either student council members meeting or meeting between the student council and MIST students.

*3. In a few words, how would you describe the value that your AUS education has brought you in general and to accomplishing the goals in your current position? What role do you see AUS playing in the UAE as the University adds more graduate programs and possibly some doctoral level courses of study?*

During my studies at AUS, I gained a lot of useful skills such as time management, working under stress, having self confidence, and working in teams. In addition, one of the courses that made me choose water and environmental engineering as my masters program was one of the required civil engineering courses I took in AUS, which was water and environmental engineering. I liked the material and it attracted me to learn more about environmental issues facing the planet. I believe the AUS new graduate programs are a great addition, which will play an important role in supporting its position as one of the leading universities in the UAE and the Middle East in general.

*4. What is your motto in life?*

No pain, no gain

*5. What was the most memorable book that you recently read? And what film has made the most lasting impression on you?*

Book: *The Cay* by Theodore Taylor, Movie: *An Inconvenient Truth*

*6. What advice would you give to current AUS undergraduate and/or graduate students?*

Arrange your time between studying and fun. Time management is a powerful asset toward achieving success.

*7. If you were to recommend an AUS education to other members of your community that would be because....*

It is a unique experience in which learning is fun.

## **AUS Prepares Graduating Students for Competitive Job Market**

AUS recently held a week-long ‘Job Preparation Day’ to prepare its graduating students for today’s competitive job market. “The idea behind this special event was to prepare our graduating students to look for jobs and to enhance their chances of success in the competitive job market of today,” said Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs.

The event was organized by the University’s Office of Development and Alumni Affairs and held separately for the School of Business and Management, School of Architecture and Design, College of Engineering, and the College of Arts and Sciences.

The program included presentations on CV and cover letter writing, interview preparation, and interviewing skills. A concurrent presentation on career opportunities in different disciplines, skills needed for each career, current job market conditions, and the long-term industry outlook was also held. These were followed by “mock interviews” for the “made-up job vacancies.”

Dr. Zaher Zantout, Senior Advancement Officer and Associate Professor of Finance, said that the program received a very positive oral response from students and written questionnaires were distributed among students for their feedback at the end of the event. Senior human resources (HR) executives from major companies participated in the program by providing additional insight about their respective industries. The event was also attended by various faculty members.

## Pioneer Emirati Business Leader and Author Lauds the Role of Sheikh Zayed as the Best Educator

During a lecture entitled "Reminiscences from the Early Days of the UAE," which was held as part of the Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture Series on February 2nd at AUS, His Excellency Mohammed Abdul Jalil Al Fahim spoke of how His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan was the sole individual responsible for the complete transformation of Abu Dhabi from a small town with barely any infrastructure to a vibrant global metropolis with a dynamic and thriving population.

Al Fahim, author of the much acclaimed *From Rags to Riches: A History of Abu Dhabi*, and one of the UAE's most prominent business leaders, noted that "Sheikh Zayed was a visionary. He was a Bedouin who was proud of his roots. He had a clear vision of where he wanted to see his people and his country." He recalled the early years of his life when there was hardly any electricity or roads in Abu Dhabi. "We never dreamed of roads and cars and airplanes," he said. "But Sheikh Zayed changed all that. He became a mentor and a guide to us, the best teacher one could ask for," he added.



34 | Al Fahim said that the late Ruler of Abu Dhabi encouraged people to educate themselves and sent him to England for further studies in 1967.

On his return, he and others like him were given the task of pioneering various new projects and development work with the guidance of Sheikh Zayed.

"We worked long hours serving on a number of government committees. Because of the initiatives taken by Sheikh Zayed a few years prior to the formation of the UAE, we were ready for the change when it came, we had a great deal of determination and confidence," he said.

Al Fahim also shed light on the crucial role played by women in the early years, noting that despite the fact that they did not all have access to education until 1968, "they played a pioneering role in the upbringing and education of the young in those days." He noted that it was while the men were away for months working, "it was the women who held the fort and took care of all the duties such as tending to the animals, selling fish in the market, as well as following up on the children's education." Addressing the students in attendance, Al Fahim said that today's youth are fortunate to be growing

up in an environment that is supportive and full of opportunities. "You must make the most of these, as you have to build on the achievements of the earlier generations. We worked very hard to build a base for you. educational opportunities you have are tremendous. We have to be grateful to leaders such as Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah, for creating such world-class institutions of higher learning as AUS. You have much better education and incredible technology at your disposal, and a much better all-round environment. Therefore you must do a 100 times better than the generation that preceded you," he said.

Al Fahim is the former CEO and honorary chairman of the Al Fahim Group, which is one of the largest private business conglomerates in the UAE.

The lecture drew a capacity crowd and was attended by the AUS Chancellor as well as other senior University officials, faculty members, students, and members of the media.

# Distinguished Lecture Series

## Well-known UAE Business Leader Speaks at AUS

According to Abdullah Juma Al Sari, Chairman of the FAL Group, we must consider ourselves privileged as the United Arab Emirates offers great opportunities for all. As one of Sharjah's most prominent business leaders, Al Sari delivered this insight at a lecture given at AUS on January 31 entitled 'Family Business and Entrepreneurship in Today's Economic Climate: Challenges and Opportunities' held as part of the Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture Series at the University

Al Sari noted that for us to take advantage of these opportunities we must be patient. During his lecture, he spoke about the many prospects that are now available for higher education in the Emirates and indicated that education is an extremely important part of one's life.

He said that in any kind of business, the importance of human capability cannot be underestimated. "People are unique; each individual has a different capability, each has his own strengths. A successful company must see that it manages its human resources in the most efficient manner." Al Sari also spoke briefly about the beginning of his group's success in the shipping and oil trading business, mentioning that over the past four decades their operations have stretched from Venezuela and Iceland all the way to Korea and Japan.

With headquarters in Sharjah, the FAL Group is a diversified family of companies with interests in oil trading, shipping, shipbuilding, manufacturing and automobile and ship lubricants, financing, insurance, and real estate.



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## US Expert Lectures on New Balance of Power in Middle East

The Middle East is turning into a multi-polar region, said renowned American academic and expert on the region, Dr. Michael Hudson, Seif Ghobash Professor of Arab Studies and Director of the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University in Washington, DC He made these remarks at a special lecture entitled "Shifting Sands: The New Balance of Power in the Middle East" held on November 8, at AUS.

Professor Hudson said that despite some negative indicators, "underlying trends affecting the region could lead to a more stable, less dangerous situation in the years ahead." His lecture focused on five themes: the changing regional balance of power, the legitimacy and effectiveness of Middle East regimes, the challenge of non-state actors, the new forms of power and influence and the uneven performance of the United States in the region. As for US President



Obama's administration, Hudson said that "President Obama's speech at Cairo University last June was a masterpiece of symbolism, and it substantially boosted America's reputation in Arab and Muslim public opinion." The lecture, which was part of "The Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture Series," was attended by Chancellor Heath and other senior University officials, faculty, and students.

# International Experts At on American

Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme  
scholars and experts from around the world on “American Government, Politics and Policy”

Held by The International Studies Department and The Office of Development and Alumni Affairs in AUS in collaboration with American University, Washington, DC, and its Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies under Professor James Thurber, the conference brought together leading commentators and academics from the US, Europe and the Middle East to discuss a number of issues relating to the Obama presidency. Speaking at the opening session, Chancellor Heath welcomed the delegates to AUS and said that the conference promised to be an extraordinary event and that he looked forward to hearing the views of the experts assembled on this compelling topic. Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, and Professor of International Studies, also spoke on the occasion and welcomed the participants to the conference. “President Obama appears to look for the common ground where many partners and allies could find common grounds as a means for collaboration,” she said. “In other words, there is a built-in cooperation and willingness to identify shared values that speak to a broader understanding of the values and orientation of allies. Barak Obama’s cooperative leanings kindled heightened expectations and optimism in the Middle East and elsewhere,” she added.

Prior to the first opening panel discussion, Dr. James Thurber, Distinguished Professor and Director, Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies and Department of Government, American University, thanked His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah for his patronage of the conference. “Every time I visit AUS, I am very impressed by the caliber of faculty members and students here as well as by the wonderful facilities available on campus,” he said.

One of the world’s preminent experts on the Middle East, Professor Gilles Kepel, Director of Doctoral Studies on the Arab/Muslim World, Institute of Political Studies, Paris, was the first speaker on the panel discussion to address the gathering. Entitled ‘President Obama’s Administration: Prospects for the Middle East,’ Professor Kepel’s presentation focused on what he described as the three main crisis points in the Middle East confronting President Obama. The first is the Arab-Israeli crisis. “The second axis of crisis is Iraq and the Gulf crisis,” noted Professor Kepel. The major issue with Iraq is how to manage the US pullout from that country, while maintaining an adequate balance of power.



# Attend AUS Conference Government

The Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah, an international conference attended by renowned  
under President Obama” was held on January 25 at AUS

Professor Kepel identified the third axis as the Afghanistan-Pakistan crisis. He said that there had been a change in direction, it seemed, as the ‘war on terror’ had changed to a ‘war on terrorists’ in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and that “ a reassessment of policy is required on that front.” Dr. Abdulkhaliq Abdallah, Professor of Political Science, UAE University, delivered his presentation entitled ‘Barak Obama’s Presidency: A Perspective from the Gulf Region.’ According to Dr. Abdallah, President Obama had done a very good job since his assumption of office. He said that even though his popularity might have lessened domestically, Obama remained a popular figure outside the US. “In the span of one year, he has managed to move the US away from unilateralism and militarism. One consistent approach of his presidency has been the fact that he has kept away from the more belligerent approach of his predecessor. He has brought back diplomacy and dialogue to American foreign policy,” explained Dr. Abdallah.

As the last speaker of the discussion, Dr. Thurber spoke on ‘President Obama, Congress and the Battle with Interest Groups and Lobbyists.’ He emphasized the significance

of the “corruption” theme and the means of addressing it under Obama’s presidency and addressed the many reforms Obama had in mind as well as the intended and unintended consequences of his lobbying reforms. Dr. Thurber stated that the need for such reforms came as a result of several corruption instances that were identified in the political system as well as the strong public opinion on this issue. “Corruption is a central theme to be addressed worldwide. After the economy, this was a key issue domestically,” he noted. He said that Obama’s reforms “aim to promote more transparency and more accountability in the system.” The conference had three other panel discussions that dealt with wide ranging topics dealing with the Obama administration. Dr. Michael Hudson, Saif Ghobash Professor of International Relations, Center for Contemporary Studies, Georgetown University, delivered the keynote speech at the event. Academics from Stanford University, Sciences Po, France, University of Maryland at College Park, UCLA, King Saud University, University of Michigan, UAE University, American University (DC), and AUS among others spoke at the conference.



# Alumni Voices from Dubai Economic Council

## Hanan Al Awadhi

1. *Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines (this is a free “space” including hobbies and anything else you would like to share about yourself?)*

Hanan Alawadi, Economics graduate 2008, hobbies: music, writing, reading.

2. *What is the title of your current position and what are your current responsibilities? A little more broadly, what does a typical work day schedule look like?*

Economic Research Assistant, working on Council research initiatives with a research team led by top economists, data collection and analysis

A typical day comprises conducting these tasks depending on the stage that we are at in the study.

3. *In a few words, how would you describe the value that your AUS education has brought you in general and to accomplishing the goals in your current position? What role do you see AUS playing in the UAE as the University adds more graduate programs and possibly some doctoral level courses of study?*

AUS has well equipped us to compete in today's market. We feel very competent in the workplace and actually find ourselves yearning to go back to learn whatever we feel that we lack.

As is, AUS is already very prominent, and we found that our degree is quite sought after in the market. Graduate programs of study would only increase this.

4. *What is your motto in life?*

“If you limit your choices only to what seems possible or reasonable, you disconnect yourself from what you truly want, and all that is left is compromise.”

Robert Fritz

5. *What was the most memorable book that you recently read? And what film has made the most lasting impression on you?*

Book: *The Federalist Papers*

Movie: *Braveheart* (as old as it is, I find it very moving—the passion depicted in the movie is incredible and timeless)

6. *What advice would you give to current AUS undergraduate and/or graduate students?*

STUDY! DO WELL! There will come a time when you wish that you payed more attention in that one boring class, or when you wish that you worked a bit harder and got that “A” because it does make a difference when you start to applying to graduate schools.

7. *If you were to recommend an AUS education to other members of your community that would be because....*

I studied in the US before coming to AUS, and feel that it is very comparable to what I had been studying there. We are now able to receive quality American education from the comfort of our own homes. The international diversity is great and the classroom experience with them was incomparable.

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## Where Are You Now?

Name: **Reema Saffarini**

Degrees:

BA in Mass Communication with a concentration in Print Journalism, AUS, 2004

MA in Middle East Policy Studies, University of Exeter, UK, 2010

It is kind of weird when I think that six years ago I graduated from AUS—A gasp seems to always escape from the university gates' guards whenever I tell them I am a 2004 graduate before ushering me in without bothering to check my ID! The past years have been colorful with the two jobs I had as a newspaper reporter then as PR officer followed by a fantastic year I spent at the University of Exeter to become recently a holder of an MA in Middle East Policy Studies. However, what I have come to appreciate the most are the friendships I made at AUS. It is those who are always there to share my happiness, give me advice, tell me of when I am wrong and offer a shoulder to cry on when times get difficult who have made it all worth the while. For that I thank you very much.



# A Message from AUSAA Board

Dear AUS Alumni,

Whether you live in or near Sharjah or on the other side of the globe, you can still be involved in the AUS Alumni Association (AUSAA). AUSAA's main goal is to build and sustain a lifelong relationship between the University and its alumni. To achieve this, the AUSAA continues to seek innovative ways to serve you and to reconnect you with your fellow alumni and the University. Like all other alumni associations, AUSAA is a volunteer-driven organization. You, its members, are at the heart of the association. With your help, as actively involved volunteers, AUSAA will be able to help every alumni remain connected regardless of geographical location.

Our strength and ongoing success is tied intimately with your willingness to get involved and your effectiveness in identifying and recruiting committed and dedicated alumni volunteers. Alumni are needed to serve on the Association's board, council, chapters, and special committees, and to participate in its gatherings and events. When you participate and give back to AUS, you are promoting its academic excellence, enhancing the reputation of its international prominence, and protecting the value of an AUS degree. If you are curious and you ask, "How can I get involved?" we are here to help.

AUSAA allows alumni to use their talents and focus their energy in areas that are of interest to them and helpful to the University. In this way you can give of yourself how and when you choose. We need you to take the first step. Sometimes, it only takes that one step to change a life. Find out how the AUSAA can help you make that step. So what are you waiting for? It is time to get involved. And remember, you, the alumni, are how we make AUSAA flourish and there is room for everybody.

AUSAA Founding Board,





# A Family Affair: The Al Fardan Sisters

## Dana and Noor Al Fardan

In Qatar, the Al Fardan name is currently one of the most recognizable names in the jewelry industry and has been since 1954. Today, two sisters and AUS graduates, Dana and Noor Al Fardan, are set to become the newest leaders of their family business. In this article, *AUS Connect* looks at how they achieved their current standing and how they view the world of jewelry retail and design.

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Both young women completed bachelor's degrees at AUS. Dana notes that her degree was in international relations, which might seem unrelated to the jewelry industry, but she sees parallels. Dana sees the jewelry business as made up of an international body of individuals working to produce highly prized pieces of art, and those pieces are distributed through representatives all over the world and exhibited at high profile events. Much like the world of international relations, sometimes there are conflicts, but in the end, it comes down to communication and understanding between the supplier and the retailer.

Following their graduation from AUS they moved to London to obtain gemology degrees at the GIA (Gemological Institute of America). Those degrees helped them gain knowledge about the science behind diamonds and colored stones, how they are formed and mined, how to grade and identify them, etc. Travelling was also important in preparing them for their new roles, and they visited several exhibitions around the world where they were able to view new trends and manufacturing methods.

Dana and Noor both see jewelry as an art form and as a mode of self-expression, which often reflects a person's values and interests. When their grandfather first founded his jewellery business, his customer base was only interested in yellow gold products. However, with consistent

changes in customers' interests and desires, they have noted that this year rose gold pieces are the most requested and they have added rose gold to their production line.

Due to the creative freedom inherent in the jewelry industry, which absorbs trends from the fashion world, art, and film, the Al Fardan sisters maintain their niche in the luxury lifestyle industry of Qatar. They are both pleased with the role major jewelry brands are playing in allying themselves with charities around the world and being a part of highlighting real world issues and crises.

The two young women have a lot to offer the jewelry world and AUS and our alumni will certainly be watching to see what their futures hold.





## Views from Alumnus

### Albert Dias

Engineering '03

1) *Would you please introduce yourself in a few lines (this is a free "space" including hobbies and anything else you would like to share about yourself)?*

At the risk of sounding like someone at a support group meeting, "hi, I'm Albert." I'm a graduate from the school of engineering's class of 2003. I was born in India and have spent a good twenty six years of my life in the Middle East, but still can't put together a sentence in Arabic to save my soul. I've taken up playing the guitar and learning to play golf right here in the UAE over the last year, but never miss an opportunity to travel around the world.

2) *What is the title of your current position and what are your current responsibilities? A little more broadly, what does a typical work day schedule look like?*

I serve as the marketing and technology director of the UAE's first premium-experience travel website, musafir.com, which I co-founded with fellow AUS alumnus Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani and Sachin Gadoya. It may not seem like a lot until you actually sit down and start to plan your next holiday, but I believe that my first responsibility at the company is being a user experience champion – it's all about making travel planning online easier in the UAE. A typical day on my planner involves overseeing the growth of the company, helping shape our product strategy and spreading the word about musafir.com.

3) *In a few words, how would you describe the value that your AUS education has brought you in general and to accomplishing the goals in your current position? What role do you see AUS playing in the UAE as the university adds more graduate programs and possibly some doctoral level courses of study?*

I have to admit that I'm in a field of business which is quite different from my major. In fact, it's the minors and electives that most people take for granted that have helped me accomplish my goals today. However, if there's one thing my years at AUS taught me, it's managing complexity.

I see AUS playing a greater role in collaborating with the UAE's industries to help change, if not save lives as more specialized graduate programs are added. In fact I still remember the excitement of the days when the university's first earthquake observatory was set up.

4) *What is your motto in life?*

Those of you expecting a quote in Latin or phrases about perseverance are going to be disappointed, because my motto in life is simple - be the best. It will drive you to do whatever it takes to succeed regardless of how small a task or how impossible a challenge may seem.



5) *What was the most memorable book that you recently read? And what film has made the most lasting impression on you?*

This may come as a surprise to most, but I've never read a book I didn't have to in my life. With the increasing democratization of content on the Internet, I believe that our most memorable experiences are the ones we ourselves have to share than those shared by others. Clichéd as it may seem, but I'd have to say that *Gandhi* left me with more of a lasting impression than any other film in recent history. It isn't quite about cinematographic excellence as it is the life of Mahatma Gandhi himself. It takes courage to stand for what you believe in.

6) *What advice you would like to give to fellow AUS alumni?*

Having been in the working world for almost seven years now, I'd say that the one piece of advice I'm keen to share with AUS alumni is that they should seek opportunities to collaborate with, and support fellow alumni. You'll be surprised at how much we all have in common when it comes down to the way we think and the laughs you'll be able to share over a cup of coffee.

7) *What advice would you give to current AUS undergraduate and/or graduate students?*

I'm probably biased against the arts when I say this, but in today's economic climate I'd recommend that undergraduate students take advantage of their time on campus to nurture their business management and leadership skills, regardless of the field of study they're in. They'll prove to be invaluable to the entrepreneur inside you well after you've graduated.

8) *If you were to recommend an AUS education to other members of your community that would be because....*

I'd recommend an AUS education to anyone who's keen to pursue a career in the Middle East because it offers a unique opportunity to meet some of the region's brightest minds in an atmosphere where leadership is encouraged and a mutual respect for cultures earned.

## Remarks by Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah

Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs  
& Professor of International Studies

In this issue of *AUS Connect*, examples abound of the AUS “can do” ethic carried out by our alumni far and wide. In the first article you will read about alumna Tahmina Mehdi, who moved from her AUS internship to a spring internship at the White House in Washington, D.C. Tammy was selected for this prestigious award among a field of hundreds of applicants and nominees. AUS can compete with the best of them and win!

Two AUS architects won the prestigious 2009 ‘Best Mixed Use Project’ at the Middle East Architect Awards. Ahmed Ebrahim and Farid Esmaeil (’03) co-founded X-Architects, and together designed the award winning ‘Xeritown’ --an urban complex designed to merge into the desert landscape of the UAE.

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan al Qassimi, remarked on the renown reputation that its graduates carry during his commencement address in December. This standard of excellence is attested to by the significant number of our graduates who have successfully won admission to some of the top graduate schools in the world. The excellence can only improve as the reputation of AUS and its alumni travels widely. You are all ambassadors of your alma mater in whatever career you pursue and in whatever part of the world you call home.



Our alumni have already taken great strides together as teams. The Dubai chapter of the AUS Alumni Association organized a trip for 40 to Italy (during December). What grand fun it must have been to travel with peers in the quest of adventure and learning. It will be stimulating to hear what trips the other alumni chapters organize to chart their own adventures.

Our alumni’s “can do” spirit knows no limits in what can be achieved. It is gratifying as a former professor to see just what our alumni devise on their own and in teams, both in the workplace and within their alumni chapters. It will be even more satisfying to chart the trajectory of achievements that you and your classmates accomplish through the upcoming years.

## AUS Honors its Graduates

The Office of Development and Alumni Affairs held a special luncheon on December 29 in honor of the graduating class of Fall 2009 at the AUS Main Building Plaza. This momentous event is usually held a day prior to each commencement.





Chancellor Peter Heath, Vice Chancellor Nada Mourtada, Alumnus Abdullah AlShamsi, General Manager of Shape Architecture Practice and Research, Alumnus Ali Al Suwaidi, Senior Director of Burj Dubai, and Alumnus Bashar Gadri, General Manager of TNA Austrailia pty Ltd, addressed the graduates and congratulated them on their achievement.

Mr. Nasser Akram, Investor Relations and External Affairs Manager of Dana Gas, presented laptop prizes to senior graduates who excelled in their education with honors in all majors, as part of the "Dana Gas Honors Recognition Award."



## Where Are You Now?

Wail Mohamed, graduated with the Class of 2003 obtaining a BS in Mechanical Engineering. Wail has been accepted to the London Business School - the dual campus program Dubai-London EMBA program.

# WE WANT YOU TO STAY IN TOUCH!

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 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.

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