

# AUSconnect

The Official Newsletter of the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs



## Sultan Says AUS Will Never Compromise on the High Quality of its Education

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of the American University of Sharjah (AUS), said the university has successfully moved along the path envisaged for it and will never compromise on the high quality of its education. The Ruler of Sharjah was speaking at a ceremony honoring the graduating Class of 2008 held by the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs on June 4.



Sheikh Sultan told the graduates that the university is proud of their achievements. "You are a source of honor for us just like you are a source of honor for your parents. This university will remain open to you to help whenever you face a problem. You will always be our sons and daughters no matter where you go," he said.

Dr. Mourtada-Sabbah, Assistant to the Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, told the graduates, "You are now prepared to both see and understand the changes in the world as they unfold around you and to master the many challenges with the competence that your degree signifies." At the end of the ceremony, Mr. Hamid Jafar, member of the AUS Board of Trustees, and Chancellor Thompson honored 21 outstanding students from the Class of 2008. Each student received a laptop computer courtesy of Dana Gas.

Present at the ceremony were members of the AUS Board of Trustees, AUS Chancellor Winfred L. Thompson, AUS vice chancellors, Deans, faculty, and staff members.





# Commencement

## Sultan Urges Graduates to Embrace Spirit of Tolerance

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of the American University of Sharjah (AUS), urged the AUS graduating Class of 2008 to embrace the spirit of tolerance and cultural understanding and contribute to the development of their societies in his address at the spring 2008 AUS Commencement ceremony held on June 5. The Ruler of Sharjah awarded 464 graduates their degrees at the University City Hall in Sharjah.

The event was attended by senior government officials, members of the media, AUS faculty and administrators, and family and friends of the graduating class. His Highness congratulated the Class of 2008 on their achievements and hard work, and stressed the importance of education in creating cultural understanding. "Education and knowledge are not limited to a nationality or a coun-

try. Tolerance and understanding are the means to the betterment of the world...the American University of Sharjah is living proof that tolerance and peaceful co-existence among people from different cultures can be achieved," he said.

Sheikh Sultan added that the university has succeeded in becoming a center of knowledge and education in the region. "The university has provided the fundamentals for the creation of a knowledge-based society and the development of human resources," he noted. He also highlighted the five new master's programs in engineering and the new bachelor's degree in biology that AUS will launch in August. "The university has entered a new era of development and expansion to keep up with the rapid changes of the job market and the needs of the students. [AUS] has raised the bar when it comes to the





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level of higher education in the region and with the new programs the university will be offering, [AUS] will continue to strive to maintain its academic excellence and commitment to providing high-quality education," pronounced the university president. AUS Chancellor Winfred Thompson expressed his pride in the graduates saying that it gave him great pleasure to watch them "grow, learn, and achieve" during their university years. "You are truly an outstanding group of men and women, and I wish you great success in your careers and great happiness in you lives," he said. "I can take pride, as we award your degrees today, that I was able to contribute to your education at the American University of Sharjah in small but hopefully not insignificant ways."

Hend Hossam, the Class of 2008's designated speaker at the ceremony, urged the graduates to maintain their values as they step into the real world. "We are stepping onto unfamiliar ground and the possibilities that await us are exhilarating and endless. Now is the time for us to prove ourselves and to shine... the question is: are we taking this step as men and women of strong values and unshakable faith?" she said.

Hossam added, "Today's world is constantly trying to change us, trying to turn us into people who compromise

their values in order to overcome life's obstacles. To maintain a sense of who we are and the values we hold, whether we attain the heights of success or experience the deepest defeat, these are the most important challenges that we are going to face."

Graduates Ali Yousuf Al Amouri and Murtaza Ali Abbas were honored with the President's Cup for earning the highest grade point average in their graduating class. The two graduates achieved the full grade point average of 4.0 out of 4.0. The names of each year's honorees are engraved on the cup, which is permanently displayed on campus.

Graduate Imad Abu Yousuf was awarded the Chancellor's Cup for an outstanding combination of scholarship, character, leadership, and service to the university. At the end of the ceremony, Dr. Thompson presented the Ruler of Sharjah and President of AUS a Holy Qur'an made of crystal, as a gift on behalf of the Class of 2008 in appreciation for his support and wise leadership.





# AUS Bids Chancellor Thompson Farewell



His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of the American University of Sharjah (AUS), on June 4 honored Dr. Winfred Thompson, AUS Chancellor, for his hard work and achievements as he leaves his post after six years.

The Ruler of Sharjah presented Dr. Thompson with a commemorative shield from the university. In addition, Sheik Sultan unveiled a plaque in the rotunda of the university's Main Building to recognize Dr. Thompson's tenure as the second chancellor of AUS.

"Dr. Thompson has worked hard to bring this university to its present international standing, and we want to thank him for his outstanding effort," said the Ruler of Sharjah. Present on the occasion were members of the AUS Board of Trustees, AUS vice chancellors, university officials, faculty, and students. The university also held a farewell lunch for Dr. Thompson on June 9.

Dr. Thompson thanked His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of AUS, for his support throughout his years at AUS. He said he would always cherish his years at the university. He wished all those present the best of luck, urging them to keep up the good work that has made the university a leading institution of higher education in the region.

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## Message from Chancellor Thompson to AUS Alumni

Dear AUS Graduates,

As you may have learned, I will soon complete my service as AUS Chancellor and return to my family in the United States. I wish to take this opportunity to let you know what a pleasure and honor it has been for me to work with you as students and alumni. Observing your maturation and success has been the most rewarding part of my work at AUS, and I extend my gratitude to His Highness Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi for giving me this wonderful opportunity.

Though still a youthful institution, AUS has earned an outstanding reputation and has extraordinary bright prospects for the future. The last six years, like the previous four prior to my arrival, have seen both growth and improvement, and AUS can quite proudly claim, after just one decade, the mantle of the premier institution in the Gulf.

I hope that you will not only join but become active members of the Alumni Association, and I hope you will be, as I shall, a lifelong supporter of AUS.

With all good wishes,

Winfred L. Thompson  
Chancellor





# Dr. Peter Heath Named Next Chancellor of AUS

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al-Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, and Founder and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the American University of Sharjah, approved the appointment of Dr. Peter Heath as the third Chancellor of the university effective August 1, 2008.

In making the announcement, His Highness remarked that the number of highly qualified applicants for the position was a confirmation of the academic stature of the young university. The large pool of candidates included sitting presidents, vice presidents, and deans of well known North American universities.

"Dr. Heath was chosen for the position," according to His Highness the Ruler, "because of his demonstrated ability as a scholar and administrator in both the United States and the Middle East. His background uniquely qualifies him to lead AUS to new levels of academic excellence in its second decade. The enhancement of our academic programs is the principal charge given to Dr. Heath by the Trustees."

Dr. Heath was selected at the conclusion of an extensive eight-month search process conducted in a manner consistent with best practice in American higher education. A search committee consisting of five members of the Board of Trustees worked with an American search firm and a Campus Advisory Committee representative of faculty, staff, and students to identify four finalists to bring to campus for meetings with all constituencies of the institution. The choice of Dr. Heath represented a consensus judgment of the university community, the Board of Trustees and Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al-Qassimi.

Dr. Heath received his B.A., magna cum laude, from Princeton University and his Ph.D. in Near Eastern Language and Civilization from Harvard University. His first appointment was to the faculty of Birzeit University on the West Bank in Palestine. In 1988 he returned to the U.S. where he built a distinguished record at one of America's leading institutions, Washington University in St. Louis. He became a full professor of Arabic Language and Literature, Director of the Center for the Study of Islamic Societies and Civilizations, and Chair of the Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages. In 1998 he was called to the American University of Beirut as Provost where he has played a leading role in the rebuilding of that distinguished institution. As second officer of the administration, his scope of duties included every aspect of university leadership.

The new AUS Chancellor has remained active as a scholar throughout his career. He is the author of monographs as well as of some thirty articles in refereed professional journals in addition to more occasional writings.

On accepting the appointment as Chancellor, Dr. Heath made the following statement, "I am tremendously excited by my appointment as



Chancellor of AUS. This young university has made impressive progress in a remarkably short period, firmly establishing its reputation as an important regional university. With over 80 nationalities represented, one experiences a truly global campus characterized by a unique blend of innovation and tradition. I look forward to working energetically with the President of the University, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al-Qassimi and the Trustees, and with faculty, staff, students, and alumni to advance the educational mission of the University; to broaden awareness of its already notable academic accomplishments; and to put AUS firmly at the forefront of higher education in the region and beyond."

Dr. Heath succeeds Dr. Winfred Thompson, who will be retiring as Chancellor of AUS this summer. Sheikh Dr. Sultan said, "Dr. Thompson would be best remembered for the remarkable growth of AUS that he led during his tenure from Fall 2002 down to the present time."

The role of AUS alumni, as always, was not overlooked in this important process. AUS alumni were actively involved in the recruitment effort both by participating in an alumni luncheon series with the various candidates in addition to attending the general meetings scheduled on campus by the Chancellor Search Committee and the Campus Advisory Committee.



# Sultan Meets US Secretary of Education:

## Stresses the Need for Cultural Tolerance and to Further Educational Collaboration

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, emphasized the need to cultivate understanding and tolerance between different cultures and religions. He stated this during talks held May 20, with visiting US Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings at his office at the American University of Sharjah (AUS).

The Ruler of Sharjah emphasized the need to separate politics from education, saying that no matter what people's differences are, they need to come together. He also emphasized the need to build a knowledge-based society and to work towards a greater collaboration with US universities.

- 6 Sheikh Sultan also briefed Secretary Spellings on the history of AUS. He indicated that since the inception of the university he has always stressed the importance of maintaining high academic standards and making the university a pioneering higher education institution that is on par with its counterparts in the United States. The US Secretary of Education was also briefed on the university's programs and future plans, the nature of university life at AUS, and the diverse student body.

Secretary Spellings expressed her interest in what the university has to offer its students and the education drive in Sharjah led by Sheikh Sultan. She added that there is a need to build more partnerships around the world to create "win-win situations" where people can learn and benefit from one another.

Present at the meeting were Hamid Jafar, AUS Board of Trustees Member and Chairman and CEO of Crescent Petroleum Company; Dr. Winfred Thompson, Chancellor of AUS; US Consul General Paul Sutphin; Salem Al Qaseer, AUS Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs; Ali Shuhaimy, AUS Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management; Dr. John Mosbo, AUS Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; and



Dr. Nada Mourtada, AUS Assistant to the Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs.

Secretary Spellings and the delegation accompanying her also toured the university where they visited the university library. Dr. Thompson and University Librarian Kathy Ray introduced the visitors to the library's services. She also met some AUS students and talked with them about student life.

At the end of the visit to AUS, His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah accompanied the US Secretary of Education on a tour of the Dr. Sultan Al Qassimi Center for Gulf Studies also located within Sharjah University City.

Sheikh Sultan briefed Spellings on the documents and films about the Gulf and the UAE, which are housed in the Center. He also showed her the collection of maps and models that reflect the history and culture of the region. Spellings commended the Center, which she identified as a center of knowledge that documents the region's history, enriches the culture, and protects the national identity of the people of the UAE and the Gulf. Present on the occasion was Ali Al-Merri, Director of the Center.



# AUS Board Approves AED 350 Million Budget

The Board of Trustees of the American University of Sharjah approved an AED 350 million budget for the University for fiscal year 2009 at its spring meeting, which was held June 4 on campus. This was announced by AUS Chancellor Winfred Thompson, who said that the figure represented a 17 percent increase over last year's budget.



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The meeting, which was chaired by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah, Founder and President of AUS, also saw the approval of a new graduate certificate program for museum and heritage studies.

Chancellor Thompson indicated that the Board also approved a cost of living increase for all university employees effective June 1, 2008. He further noted that the Board had approved a number of faculty promotions as recommended by the administration.

The Board also expressed its sincere appreciation to all donors who contributed to the University's Pioneer Scholarship Fund according to Chancellor Thompson, and the administration was directed to prepare individualized plaques for the donors. Furthermore, the Board considered reports presented by the following committees: Finance, Academic Affairs, Trusteeship, and Resource and Development.

Members of the AUS Board of Trustees include: Dr. Mary Ann Baenninger, President, College of Saint Benedict, Minnesota, USA; Joseph L. Brand, Senior Partner, Patton Boggs LLP, Washington, DC, USA; Professor Lord Alec Broers, Member of the British House of Lords, UK; Abdul Jalil Yousuf Darwish, Chairman of UAE Enterprises Group; Dr. Leroy S. Fletcher, Regents Professor Emeritus, Thomas A. Dietz Professor Emeritus, Texas A&M University, USA; Dr. Roderick S. French, Chancellor Emeritus, American University of Sharjah; Hamid D. Jafar, Chairman and CEO, Crescent Petroleum Company, Sharjah; Dr. Cornelius Kerwin, President, American University, Washington, DC, USA; Baroness Onora O'Neil of Bengarve, CBE PBA FMedSci, Member of the British House of Lords, UK; Honorable John R. Petty, Chairman, TECSEC, Incorporated, Virginia, USA; Maroun A. Semaan, President and CEO, Petrofac International Ltd., Sharjah; and Dr. Winfred L. Thompson, Chancellor, AUS.



# Leadership by Example

By Zaineb Al Amin

Walking through the familiar campus, he stops to buy coffee and a donut, and then takes a seat, ready to chat with another student. Only he's not rushing to spend some time with a friend before hurrying to reach a class on time. Neither is he a member of the faculty, watching students walking by, wondering if they are tomorrow's leaders. He is a unique graduate who talks to me about the years he spent in university, how those years affected him, and why he decided to give back to this institution.

Sheikh Mohammad bin Faisal Al Qassimi, AUS Class of 2007 graduate in International Studies, is a reader, swimmer, mixed martial arts fighter, and polo player with vision. With his father, Sheikh Faisal bin Khalid Al Qassimi as his role model, Sheikh Mohammad is ready to face the future and accomplish his dreams. Following his father's example of generosity and contribution to the community, Sheikh Mohammad became the first contributor to the AUS Pioneer Scholarship Fund when he donated one million dirhams to the fund, which will create new scholarships for students. "The American University of Sharjah played a great role in my life and development, and I am pleased to have this opportunity to express my gratitude by playing a role in its ongoing growth and improvement," said Sheikh Mohammad. The Pioneer Scholarship Fund, which was established in recognition of the university's 10th anniversary, is intended to function as a matching grant program, whereby His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Member of the UAE Supreme Council, Ruler of Sharjah and President of the American University of Sharjah, will match donations made by private contributors and groups to create scholarships for students who excel in academic pursuits and are in need of financial assistance.

Attending AUS, both as a student and as a maturing young man, was a very important stage in Mohammad's life. He believes the university has "a culture unto itself," where students learn to grow within its environment, encountering different situations, with different people from a wide variety of backgrounds and ethnicities. Mohammad also described AUS as a phase in life that some are lucky to go through, and some aren't. "It's an opportunity which you lose out on if you don't study here. If you study here and participate in such an opportunity, you can master vast amounts of knowledge with which you can arm yourself in the future." As Mohammad sees it, there is a path to intellectual learning, which AUS helps lead its students to walk down. Studying at AUS, Mohammad encountered different "mind shifts," and he believes that the university influenced his personal growth. Despite the tremendous workload from the various assignments, preparations and examinations, there is always a pleasant atmosphere and a sense of enjoyment when it comes to studying at AUS. When asked how he would describe his university experience, Mohammad's reply revolved around excitement. "You can always study with friends or take a break to enjoy moments which you'll never forget." For Mohammad, the unforgettable moments were the coffee breaks, the trips to Paris and Washington, and the regular gatherings of friends.

Currently, Mohammad is considering going to London to study for his Masters degree. He feels AUS helped prepare him for such a step academically as well as through the wonderful experiences he had interacting with the vastly diverse community of students, faculty,



and the general AUS community, which gave him a "higher level of comprehension." University helped him to refine his personal goals in life, building on them while maintaining their basic essence.

The education and development of AUS students means a lot to Mohammad. It means stronger alumni and a stronger institution. It also means a larger contribution to education, which is what he has become part of.

Sheikh Mohammad's donation marked him as the first AUS Alumni to make a contribution to the fund. "This place deserves a lot," he said, and it is Mohammad's deep appreciation of AUS that motivated him to make such a generous donation. As he said, AUS gave him, "a great opportunity." Although it may be a normal, routine, procedure to meet people from all over the world on a daily basis at AUS, Mohammad recognizes that in normal circumstances it is rare to find a place with such a "thorough understanding of the world." Mohammad appreciates the fact that "if you want to meet a liberal at AUS, you can. If you want to meet a conservative at AUS you can find one, and easily. It is possible to interact with people from different cultures and share something with them; thereby widening your own scope and horizons, and generally developing a better understanding of the world around you."

Looking ahead, Mohammad foresees a bright future for AUS and its students. When asked where he sees the institution ten years from now, he predicts it as being a much more competitive place. He anticipates that the best students and faculty in the Gulf would wish to join the AUS community. If it carries on being directed along the right path, Mohammad believes AUS has potential for becoming "the leading institution in the Middle East."



# Salutations to the Graduating Class

*By Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah*

*Assistant to the Chancellor for Development & Alumni Affairs*

I wish to congratulate you on your graduation, which will mark the first day of the rest of your life. You have demonstrated the requirements of an educated citizen of the world, as testified by your degree. You will now embark on the no less exciting adventure of putting the intellectual and practical skills you have garnered to use in whatever career path you choose --whether it is in business, education, or government. You not only carry the AUS name but the AUS imprint in your vision of what can be, how you approach solving problems, and how you interact with others. You are now broadly prepared to both see and understand the changes in the world as they unfold around you and to master the many challenges with the competence that your degree signifies.

As you go forth into the offices of business or laboratories of science, you carry both the privilege and the responsibility of serving as our future ambassadors to the world, to your communities, and to your families and friends. AUS will become further known through you as its representatives wherever your feet may take you. Those who came before you, along with the AUS community of faculty and staff, created the reputation of AUS. It is your privilege to further enhance the flame of eternal learning lit at the American University of Sharjah by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah, and President of AUS, ten years ago, to pursue the creation of a world-class institution on the banks of the Arabian Gulf--and the creation of this fine institution will continue for many generations to come.

Remember that you carry the AUS experience as part of your persona. It is my earnest hope that you will continue to remain connected to your alma mater. The University that has perfected your intellectual tool kit during the course of your study will remain forever your second home. You will find continued support from the professional staff at AUS and a ready network among fellow alumni. You will not face the world alone but with a support team of thousands, including some of the best minds in this part of the world. As His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi stated, "The relationship between you and your university should be a lifelong relationship and the university will do its best to support you in every way possible... You will always be our sons and daughters."



The Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, which I head, will be your new point of contact with AUS. My team will be sending you a steady stream of information about your classmates, events on campus, and other matters of significance to you. And I fully expect that you will actively participate in our many alumni activities, sharing with us news of your changes in life and many accomplishments.

While you may embark on a stunningly distinguished career two days or a few years from now, you will always be part of the AUS family. I congratulate you on the first accomplishment—your graduation—of what will undoubtedly be a long list of accolades to follow.

*Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah is Assistant to the Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs and Professor of International Studies. She joined AUS when the university opened its doors in September 1997. Until last year Dr. Mourtada was the Chair of the Department of International Studies. She has authored numerous books and journal articles, and most recently co-edited *Globalization and the Gulf* (London: Routledge, 2007), and the *Supreme Court of the United States* (Berkeley: Public Policy Press, 2007). Dr. Mourtada is the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Social Affairs*, the peer reviewed quarterly journal of the American University of Sharjah, which she founded, and was elected President of the AUS Faculty Senate for the term 2003-2004.*

# AUS Pioneer Scholarship Fund



10 The AUS Pioneer Fund is off to a terrific start. In addition to AUS alumnus Sheikh Mohammad bin Faisal Al Qassimi, four prominent businessmen, who are also active in the community, have recently contributed to the Pioneer Scholarship Fund. The Fund, which was established in recognition of the university's 10th anniversary, is intended to function as a matching grant program, whereby His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi will match donations made by private contributors and groups to create scholarships for students who excel at their academic pursuits and are in need of financial assistance. "We recognize that the cost of attending AUS is a significant obstacle to many deserving students. We hope that private donations will make opportunities available for many outstanding students who might otherwise never have the opportunity to attend an outstanding university such as AUS," said Chancellor Winfred Thompson at the time of the Fund's establishment.

On February 19th Mr. Wasfi Ataya, President and CEO of Sun Engineering and Construction Company and a prominent entrepreneur, became the first businessman to donate to the Fund. "Education is the best weapon one can have, which is why I was keen to contribute. This contribution will help talented students who require financial aid. I believe we should all do what we can to support education because our future progress depends on an educated, enlightened youth," he said.

Mr. Ataya is also a member of the National Advisory Council of the College of Engineering at AUS. "My relationship with the university goes back to its inception. I have a lot of respect for His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Member of UAE Supreme Council, Ruler of Sharjah and President of American University of Sharjah, and his commitment to education. It gives me immense pride to be part of this," Ataya said.

Dr. Winfred Thompson, Chancellor of AUS, expressed his appreciation for Mr. Ataya's generous support to the university. "This contribution is proof of how strong the relationship is between the university and the community. The donation made by Mr. Ataya is going to help a lot of students in need of financial support," he said.

Also present on the occasion were Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Assistant to the Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, and Lynda Ataya, AUS Registrar.

Mr. Riad Sadek, Chairman of Al Habtoor Leighton Group, has also donated one million dirham to the Pioneer Scholarship Fund. In addition to his generous donation, Mr. Sadek will also be financing the graduate studies of AUS alumnus Osama Al Ashiq, who will be pursuing his master's degree in engineering at AUS. Mr. Al Ashiq currently works as an electrical engineer with the Al Habtoor Group.

According to Mr. Sadek the key to success in life is to always believe in oneself and to pursue higher education. University students "must also believe that nothing matches honesty and integrity... wealth and position achieved with sweat and hard work are blessed and sweet. One must also believe that nothing is impossible and indeed where there is a will, there is a way."

Osama Al Ashiq expressed his happiness at receiving this scholarship. "I have been earnestly hoping for something like this to happen. I have been looking for ways to get a scholarship, and I am really thankful and excited about the prospects of going back to AUS in order to pursue graduate studies," he said.



AUS Chancellor Winfred Thompson expressed his deep appreciation of Mr. Sadek's support. "These donations will help many talented students who need financial support. Moreover, Mr. Sadek's sponsorship of one of our alumni is proof that our graduates are of a high caliber," said the Chancellor.

The donation was announced on March 19 at a meeting held in Sadek's office in Dubai. Present at the occasion was Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Assistant to Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs.



On April 7th, Dr. Hussain Al Jbori, Chairman of Binghatti Holding, donated one million dirhams to the AUS Pioneer Scholarship Fund.

Dr. Al Jbori said that his donation symbolizes his support for the generous efforts of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, in "inspiring knowledge and educational cooperation throughout the world. As active and informed participants of this society, it is our responsibility to instill knowledge and help proliferate education among our communities. Education lies at the very root of the civilized world, and only through education can we achieve better international cooperation and interdependence among the diverse peoples of the world, in the hope that this will lead to a more secure and peaceful world," said Dr. Al Jbori.

Dr. Al Jbori also noted that education is the "impetus" of economic development and prosperity, which is crucial to the overall development of today's youth and the developing Arab World. "A greater effort should also be made to bridge the gap between business and education, so that we can produce a more relevant and productive labor force, ready for tomorrow's business challenges. It is for these reasons, and for the fact that I am personally the father of two AUS alumni and one current AUS student, that I take pleasure in supporting His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi's marvelous vision for education," he said.

Dr. Winfred Thompson, Chancellor of AUS, expressed his appreciation of Dr. Al Jbori's generous support of the university. "This contribution is proof of how strong the relationship is between the university and its alumni and their families. The donation made by Dr. Al Jbori will benefit many students in need of financial support," he said.

The donation was announced in a meeting at the Office of the Chancellor at AUS. Present at the occasion was Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Assistant to Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, and Ahmad Al Jbori, AUS alumnus and hold-





er of a bachelors degree in economics and a masters degree in business administration.

April 28th witnessed a donation by the Vice Chairperson of the Sharjah Business Women's Council, Dr. Aisha Al Sayyar, of one million dirham to the AUS Pioneer Scholarship Fund. Dr. Al Sayyar, who is a former Deputy Minister of Educational Activities at the Ministry of Education and the first woman to obtain a doctorate in the UAE, said that the donation is one way of contributing towards the welfare of students. "With this fund the university is providing infinite possibilities for young talent to access all sources of knowledge available in the 21st century. It will also enable them to become active and productive members of society who can reach the highest levels of knowledge in all fields," said Dr. Al Sayyar, who is also Chair of the Board of Directors of the Sharjah American International School.

Dr. Al Sayyar, who is the mother of AUS computer science alumna Fatima Nawwaf Fawwaz, added that AUS has excelled under the guidance of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah. "It is really a great honor to contribute to this fund and support the education process at this leading institution of higher education in the region," she said.

Dr. Winfred Thompson, Chancellor of AUS, expressed his appreciation of Dr. Al Sayyar's generous support of the university.

"This contribution is evidence of how strong the relationship is between the university and its graduates and their families. The donation made by Dr. Al Sayyar will benefit many students in need of financial support," he said.

The donation was announced at a meeting held at Dr. Al Sayyar's Office at Sharjah American International School. Present on the occasion were Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Assistant to Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, AUS alumna Fatima Nawwaf Fawwaz, and Dr. Nawwaf Fawwaz.





On May 8, Mr. Patrick Chalhoub, Co-CEO of the Chalhoub Group, also contributed one million dirhams to the Pioneer Scholarship Fund. "We are pleased to collaborate with the American University of Sharjah's Pioneer Scholarship Endowment fund as part of our commitment to corporate social responsibility, of which education is a priority," said Mr. Chalhoub. Our youth are the next generation of leaders and pioneers in this region, and our investment in these young talents is key to developing excellence and meritocracy, which are in effect, the byproducts of a strong educational foundation. Given the demographics of young people in this region and the challenge of attracting and retaining young talent, we believe

that our role as a Group is critical to supporting the development of a knowledge based society," commented Patrick Chalhoub. Dr. Thompson expressed his sincere appreciation to Mr. Chalhoub on behalf of AUS and said that his gift will positively affect the lives of young students for generations to come. The Chancellor shared his hope for a continued collaboration with the Chalhoub Group in areas of mutual interest. He noted that a number of AUS graduates had recently joined this leading group.



## Accolades

**Mohammad Al-Bakri**, Class of '2006, has been selected from a field of over 500 nominees for the Saudi operations of RSA, to participate in an intensive two-year program in the United Kingdom, termed Fast Track. The program is intended to "stretch the capabilities" of young business leaders, who have been assessed with the "requisite capability, ambition and potential for executive positions" with RSA, the second largest insurance company in the UK. The program involves "tailored leadership training, job-based learning and serving a senior executive as a mentor." Topics of the Fast Track Program include leadership development, assessing changes in global culture, international assignments and the benefits of coaching.

## Where Are You Now?

**Dana Abu Aisha**, Class of '2007, BA in English Language and Literature and a Minor in Translation. Dana recently joined the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs at the American University of Sharjah. She is married to Nabil Amireh, who is the IT Manager for the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and the School of Business and Management (SBM) at AUS. Dana and Nabil have three children: Zayd (9), Esa (8) and Ali (3). Says Dana, "Studying has opened unexpected doors of opportunities. I'm really grateful to AUS. It granted me a home, an education and a wonderful career!"

## Where Are You Now?

**Amira Khalid Ballaith**, Class of '04, BS in Computer Science. Amira is currently with the Sharjah Finance Department as a Programmer and Projects Manager. Amira says, "I joined the Sharjah Finance Department as a software programmer two years ago. Soon after I joined the Department I was selected to be the e-payment project manager. The position is considered the first e-payment implementation in the emirate of Sharjah. I am very proud of my accomplishments and I'm looking forward with anticipation to more challenges. I believe that the education I received at AUS and the experiences that I have been through since graduating have opened the door to understanding so much, which in turn has empowered me. My accomplishments today are based on the vision and the challenges that I was able to take on, and I hope to continue doing so. I am grateful for every single day I spent at AUS. Most of all, I am grateful to His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi for building such a great university and giving me the opportunity to get such a fine an education. I am proud to say that I am an AUS graduate. I always will be."

## Accolades

**Kawthar Al Sulaymani**, '05 received a Master of International Business from the University of Wollongong in Dubai in July 2008. Kawthar is currently employed as the Events and Membership Executive at the Dubai International Arbitration Center, Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

## AUS Architecture Student Wins Second Place in International Competition

Fourth-year AUS architecture student, Nazneen Saifuddin, recently won second prize in the 10th annual journal of the prestigious Annual Berkeley Undergraduate Prize for Architectural Design Excellence organized by the University of California at Berkeley, USA.

Nazneen won \$2,000 for her essay "The Abolition of Congested Urbanism: A Task or a Moral Obligation?" The paper touches on the living conditions in the slums of India in addition to the housing dilemma for migrant workers from the sub-continent residing in the UAE, primarily Dubai.

The Annual Berkeley Undergraduate Prize for Architectural Design Excellence was established to promote architecture as a social art through research, writing, and criticism. Each year the prize committee selects a topic important to the understanding of the interaction between people and the built world. The 10th edition of the competition required the students to present an important social issue in their country and address it as architects.

The competition attracted architecture students from 18 countries, including Uruguay, the Philippines, Switzerland, Nigeria, China, and others. This year's essay competition was an invitation to think about the use of architectural competitions to foster the study and implementation of the social art of architecture.

## Where Are You Now?

**Kamran Farouqi**, BS in Design Management, Class of '2007. Kamran is a professional Photographer/Archivist at the American University of Sharjah. He is currently engaged to AUS alumna, Noha Aziz Pancha, also of the Class of 2007 with a BS in Finance. Noha is an Assistant Brand Manager with Transmed Overseas Inc. in Dubai.



"I have been in AUS for the past five years. Four years I was a student at SA&D and I have been working at AUS for over a year. AUS has been a very important part of my life. I have studied here, had my first job experience, and I am currently engaged to an AUS Alumna, Noha!"

# Alumni *Iftar* Series

The Office of Development and Alumni Affairs has created an "Alumni Iftar Series" that will partner the American University of Sharjah with industries that employ graduates from each of the four academic units on campus. The Series forges a mutually beneficial relationship between industry and AUS alumni and faculty. The evening events feature a dinner and workshop-like presentations to create an enduring network among alumni, employers in the Gulf region and soon-to-be graduates. The first Alumni Iftar will be sponsored by Riad Sadek, Chairman of Al Habtoor Leighton Group. This event will bring together on September 9, 2008, all Civil Engineering alumni, who graduated from AUS from 2001 to date.



# AUS and MBRF Encourage Graduate Studies for Young Achievers

The American University of Sharjah (AUS) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mohammad Bin Rashid Foundation of Dubai to enroll talented students from the Arab world in postgraduate, Masters programs in the fields of management, public and business administration, journalism and mass communication. The Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum "Pioneers Programme" will offer full scholarships to Arab students to attend prestigious universities across the Arab World. The agreement with AUS was signed by Dr. Rima Khalaf, CEO of the Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation, and Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, AUS Assistant to the Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs.

The signing, which took place at the Monarch Hotel in Dubai on April 28 marked the official media launch of the Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum "Pioneers Programme" and witnessed the signing of agreements between the foundation and partner universities. The programme will offer 100 scholarships annually for deserving undergraduate students with outstanding academic achievement, leadership potential, and financial need, to pursue their postgraduate studies at selected universities. This programme will sponsor Master's level students commencing in the 2008-09 academic year. The scholarship will cover all tuition fees and other related educational expenses.



Dr. Rima Khalaf said, "We are very delighted to launch a new programme aimed at building a knowledge based society in the Arab World. We look forward to receiving applications and we would like to advise candidates to submit an application form online, after securing an acceptance from an agreed field of study at one of the partner universities."

Dr. Mourtada noted that the scholarships from the Mohammad Bin Rashid Foundation "will provide a key ingredient in the mutual efforts to develop the components necessary for the foundation of a knowledge based society by assisting some of the best and brightest recent graduates to pursue their graduate studies in leading institutions in the Arab world. It is quite necessary to develop the critical mass in our own graduate programs to unleash the creative powers of today's students to think boldly and innovatively in devising solutions by and for an Arab context."

## Where Are You Now?

**Salim Al-Ahdab**, received a BS in Electrical Engineering in '2007. He is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Microelectronics at Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) in the Netherlands. His main interests include Mixed-Signal and Biomedical Electronics. He has published two IEEE papers and an AIP paper. He has received a Dutch patent in the area of Biomedical Electronics. Salim summarized his experiences, "AUS is best described as the golden key to the city of knowledge. Since AUS is a multicultural society, it helped me to be more open minded to the rest of the world. My professors not only taught me technical courses, but they further inspired me to be a professional Engineer."

In addition to AUS, twelve other partner universities, located in the UAE, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco, signed agreements with the Foundation. The partner universities include the American University in Cairo, the American University of Beirut, Lebanese American University, the American University of Dubai, the British University in Dubai, Michigan State University (Dubai), London Business School (Dubai), and Al Akhawayn University in Morocco among others.

# Sheikh Sultan Attends AUS Tenth A

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of the American University of Sharjah (AUS) stressed the importance for AUS alumni to have a lifelong relationship with their university.

"We want you to feel at home whenever you are on campus. The relationship between you and your university should be a lifelong relationship and the university will do its best to support you in every way possible," said Sheikh Sultan in his opening speech at the AUS Alumni Reunion Dinner celebrating the university's 10th anniversary, held on campus on Thursday, January 3, 2008.

The AUS President urged the graduates to share their experiences with the university in order to help advance the education process. "Tell the university about your experience in the real world and your professors will rely on your many experiences to design new programs," he said.

Sheikh Sultan praised the performance of the alumni in their careers. "Our alumni are performing very well all over the world. We hope to maintain our relationship with you," he said. "Distances may increase, and languages may be different, but you will always be our sons and daughters," Sultan told more than 1,500 alumni who attended the event, which was an opportunity to share with him the university's successes achieved during the past 10 years.

During the dinner, the Alumni Association presented the Sharjah Ruler with a painting by AUS professor Dr. Martin Giesen. Dr. Wael Saleh, an AUS alumnus, also presented Sheikh Sultan with his Ph.D. dissertation, which he completed at the University of Exeter on 'Non-Invasive Near-Field Microwave Detection of Breast Cancer.' Dr. Saleh is the first AUS graduate to receive a doctorate degree.

AUS Chancellor Dr. Thompson praised the vision of Sheikh Sultan and his continuous support for the university. He also acknowl-





# Anniversary Alumni Reunion Dinner

edged the faculty and staff members who have joined the university since its establishment.

Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Assistant to the Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, said the gathering was but one testimony to the vision of the AUS President that graduates would be the 'crown jewels' of AUS. "Our alumni are AUS ambassadors to the region and to the world. There is no better testimony to the quality of education at AUS than for its first alumni to have succeeded at the highest standards in all walks of their lives," she said.

"Together we have created an exceptional institution; one that can only grow in both reputation and accomplishments. We can all proudly look back on AUS' first decade of achievements, and look forward with great anticipation to what I am sure will be a second decade of achievement. One might say that, given its dynamic pace of change, one year at AUS is equal to many

years at other universities. Success, however, can only come with hard work, coupled with a vision of what might be," she added.

Discussing the future plans of the Alumni Association, Mahmoud Ghaith, President of the Alumni Association, said that the association will conduct activities, seminars, assist with graduates' employment, and sustain a database of the graduates to maintain a continuous communication process.

The reception, which was hosted by the AUS Alumni Association in collaboration with the AUS Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, was attended by a number of sheikhs and government officials, Board of Trustee members Hamid Jafar and Maroun Semaan; Dr. John Mosbo Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Salem Al Qaseer Vice-Chancellor for Public Affairs; Dr. Moza Al Shehhi Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs and faculty and staff members who joined the university at the time of its establishment in 1997-1998.





# AUS Tenth Anniversary





# Alumni Reunion Dinner





# Truly at Home in “Al-Mashriq”

By Amna Saleh

Professor Thomas DeGeorges, a young professor and a native New Yorker, now lives on the campus of the American University of Sharjah. Living at AUS is a two-way process of both giving and taking; giving of your efforts, knowledge and expertise, and taking in more knowledge and expertise. As a young university, AUS competes with internationally-known universities such as Harvard University in the United States, Oxford University in the United Kingdom, and many other well-known educational institutions around the world. To do so, AUS staffs itself with great minds that have great potential. Professor DeGeorges is an excellent example of a young professor with a great deal of potential who has a lot to offer AUS. More importantly, Professor DeGeorges believes in the AUS ideal of administrators, professors, and students working together in harmony in order to reach very high academic and pedagogical standards for the future while at the same time focusing on the present.

Professor DeGeorges is interested in the history of “Al-Mashriq,” the Middle East. His interest in the history and issues of the Middle East was the key reason behind his obtaining his masters and doctorate degrees in Middle Eastern history from Harvard University, “with a focus on North Africa.” Before going to Harvard, Professor DeGeorges indicated, “I went to school in New York and I got my bachelor degree from an institution called Brooklyn College.” After getting his bachelor degree, Professor DeGeorges worked at Pfizer, the multinational pharmaceutical firm. While writing his Ph.D. dissertation he returned to New York, where he taught at his alma mater, Brooklyn College.

In order to complete his research, Professor DeGeorges spent a great deal of time in the Arab world, in particular North Africa, before coming to the UAE. “I have been to Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, but I spent most of my time in Algeria and Tunisia.” Professor DeGeorges completed his dissertation in 2006. He notes that the topic was on Tunisian veterans, and the title of the dissertation was “A Bitter Harvest: The Social History of Tunisian Veterans.” He is now researching the history of Algerian veterans of the colonial era, and also “the Algerian *mujahdeen*, who are veterans of the Algerian war of independence, which took place between 1954 and 1956.” Professor DeGeorges devotes himself to his research and his own education. “The year before I came to AUS, I was in Algeria working on a post doctoral fellowship, so I did not have a job before I came here” DeGeorges notes. Ac-



According to professor DeGeorges, “as I worked in North Africa and since I got my degree in Arab history, coming to work in the UAE was not a difficult choice for me.”

Since professor DeGeorges has lived in North Africa, he wanted to see a different part of the Arab world. He indicates, “since I have already experienced living in the Arab world, and in a Muslim culture for about two and a half years, and I have been to Morocco, Beirut and Damascus, my views about Muslim culture are very positive and they have never changed. I wanted to see more of the Mashriq, and this is why I jumped at the chance to come to AUS.”

The UAE is a young country with many opportunities for people to start their careers. It attracts people from all over the world to participate in its growth and promises them a prosperous and successful life in return. There are many institutions and careers in the UAE where people can grow and achieve their goals on many levels; AUS is one of these institutions. As a multicultural institution AUS helps its professors learn more about the culture and traditions of the UAE and helps them recognize the successful multicultural society that the UAE has become. “Many characteristics have astonished me about the UAE, including its combination of modernity with tradition. Of



the Arab societies I have visited, I think the UAE has done the best job in incorporating things like the Internet, technology and other aspects of what I would call a modern world while maintaining a healthy respect for traditions, Islamic civilization and just an overall sense to what it needs to be Arab in the Gulf" says DeGeorges.

Professor DeGeorges enjoys living in the UAE. He finds it interesting to travel around the country, even though he has not had the chance to travel very much. Despite this he has visited Ras Al Khaimah, which has many beautiful beaches, the mountain chain near Fujairah city, as well as Al Ain.

Not only has Professor DeGeorges lived in the Arab world, he has also traveled around Al Mashriq as a tourist. "I took a short trip to Amman, in Jordan, as well as a trip to Alexandria, Egypt. I was always interested in the Arab world; as a student I was always attracted to nonwestern history, to people who were not like myself, so instead of American history I took Indian history and Arab history."

Because Professor DeGeorges is very interested in the Arab world and its culture, he has learned to speak Arabic in order to understand more about this region that fascinates him, and in order to more fully enjoy this experience. One of the things he likes most about AUS is that he can practice speaking Arabic with his students outside of class. "One of the great things about the students here, is that when I see them outside of class and I speak Arabic, they respond, so we have nice little chats. I read Arabic well, and I speak the Algerian and Tunisian dialect pretty fluently," said Professor DeGeorges. He also wants to learn more about the Arabic language, and his stay in Sharjah will help him learn more Arabic dialects, since AUS has students from all over the Arab world including: Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, the Gulf countries and many more, and they certainly would not hesitate to offer their assistance to their professor.

DeGeorges thinks that the students at AUS are more respectful than the students he taught at Harvard and Brooklyn. Students from different majors, from Mass Communication to Marketing and Engineering have become interested in the courses Professor DeGeorges teaches because he relates his courses to students' majors, and he teaches them to see the links in everything. "I enjoy seeing people who do not have an inherent interest in international studies become interested in various parts of the course."

"I had other job offers before I came here, but I was lucky enough to come to the AUS campus and I had a chance to meet with Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah who was the department chair, and Dr. Neema Nouri and other profes-

sors, and I got a chance to see the UAE." Choosing AUS has been very helpful for Professor DeGeorges' research. "AUS is helping me in my research in many ways. One of them is the location; being at AUS is very close to Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, where I do most of my research." DeGeorges also enjoys life on the AUS campus, because of its fine facilities. "I like the Sports Complex, because I like to use the gym a lot, and I think we have very good gym facilities. I also like the Starbucks coffee shop where I can often be found late at night, eating and doing my work." DeGeorges also enjoys being in his office in the Chemistry Building, where "I feel very comfortable and do most of my work." DeGeorges thinks the library is a great campus facility. "The library is very useful to me in doing my research, the collection we have on the Arab world, and the collections we have in general for history and political science are all first rate." AUS also provides Professor DeGeorges with the time to go to conferences. "The university funded a conference trip for me in November. It was the annual meeting of MESA--- the Middle East Studies Association---and was held in Montreal, where I presented a paper on Algerian and French Veterans".

All in all, Professor DeGeorges likes his life at the American University of Sharjah, its culture and its possibilities for his work and travel. "I look forward to staying here, and maintaining and deepening my links with the Emirati society and the Gulf culture."

## Where Are You Now?

**Tariq Nabil Hassan Abo-El-Naga**, BS in Computer Engineering, Class of 2003; MBA (AUS, 2006). Tariq is a Training and Development Specialist with the Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank. "Completing both my master's and bachelor's degrees at AUS has given me the educational foundation to be successful at what I do. I currently specialize in human and organizational development for a living, and I couldn't have done it if AUS had not developed me first!"

## Where Are You Now?

**Dalia Helmy**, BS in Business, Class of 2001. Dalia currently is a Senior Marketing Executive at the Mohammad Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Foundation in Dubai. She says, "I am proud to be an ambassador of AUS wherever I go. During our undergraduate years, we were groomed with the spirit and skills to become pioneers in our respective fields and to excel in whatever we do. At that time, AUS was creating everything fresh. Now, I hold my head high, as I know I am well equipped by virtue of my AUS experiences to face whatever challenges that may arise."

# Finding One's Own Space

By Amna M. Saleem

Aesthetics, the sense of beauty and proportion, are everywhere. In particular we experience aesthetics in buildings and other physical structures that make up our physical environment, in their sense of proportion, beauty, design and the intricacy of their details. All this comes naturally to Atif Khawaja. For someone whose first choice was not architecture it became quite clear he was guided in the right direction.

"I never really knew that I wanted to become an architect," recalled Atif with a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "When I first enrolled at AUS I joined the Computer Science program and I thought I wanted to be a computer programmer because everybody in those days was interested in IT. But I always had an interest in drawing and making cardboard models of things. So during my freshmen year I switched to Architecture because my mother kept telling me, 'you are so good at drawing and making plans for homes. You are interested in architecture in general, why don't you become an architect and follow your passion,' and from then on I have been involved in Architecture and I have been happy ever since," he said.



ability to identify what the problem is and highlight the key components and analytically break the problem down into smaller parts and solve it are the skills which have helped me become the architect that I am today."

Of course, Atif always had the ambition to work professionally. While university took care of the theoretical side of his education, the practical side stemmed from within. "I started working when I was in my freshman year and I kept working throughout my years at AUS and by the time I graduated I had worked for six or seven different offices," he explained. "Because of this I knew about the different management styles and office languages combined with interacting with so many different people. In fact, when I graduated, the first firm I worked for was just setting up an office in Dubai and I was instrumental in helping them establish it. That gave me important skills needed to set up an office."

Atif's ability to be two steps ahead of his freshmen peers back then helped him in setting up Centimeter Cube in 2003 with Omran Al Owais and Mohammad Al Awadhi, both also alumni of AUS. The ability to be unique is mirrored in being able to create a personal touch when it comes to design. "A lot of people tend to follow a certain design philosophy- whether it be a design language, to use a layman's expression 'how a building looks', or tending to use certain materials that they think are more appropriate and then trying to play with them their whole life—to try to perfect them," he said.

"When I'm faced with an architectural design I always take it on a case-by-case basis and what I do is look at the client's or the developer's requirements and try to determine what is more appropriate even if it is not

22 Since he joined the first group of students in the five year architecture program at AUS in 1997, it has been a memorable journey. "When I was at AUS the program was evolving. We were the first batch of architects," Atif recalled. "The campus was still being built and undergoing expansion. We didn't have a lot of facilities but we made do with everything that we had. We were a close knit community of 300 students and everybody knew everybody else. It didn't matter which program you were enrolled in; there was a sense of unity. It was fun because everyone got a chance to be involved in events that took place from time to time. Since the university was still developing we were encouraged to participate in those events. This encouraged the students to be founding members of something they were interested in or what other people were involved in. All the people from that graduating class have started their own firms or are in good positions because they are so accustomed to being pioneers; they are used to leadership roles. They gave their ideas that were realized after they left, but they will be there for the generations to come in AUS," he said.

The fact that the university had just started made life for the first students all the more special. The skills learned were bound to come in handy. "The professors emphasized the importance of analytical and conceptual skills. When you are faced with a problem, how are you able to assess the situation? Conceptually the



the same design language that I've used previously. I think one of the most important skills that one should have is analytical reasoning and analysis. If you have those two skills, whether you follow a certain philosophy or not, in my opinion, is irrelevant. Because if you are able to analyze something directly, conceptualize it, and then have the critical reasoning skills to be able to create something out of it that is more important than believing that one thing is the right way of doing things because there is never only one right way. In architecture there is no right and wrong; there are opinions. They can change and if you stick to one opinion your whole life in architecture, try to take it and perfect it; you are not going to get anywhere. The safest approach I use is that I don't follow a design philosophy. I take a project and I see what is required and I try to put some meaning into it and try to derive something from it," Atif explained.

A lack of a specific design philosophy does much to enable flexibility. Atif was quick to notice the architectural trends that are blooming across the UAE. "Something that is happening now, as a design trend, is that buildings are becoming more sculptural. In the years to come there are going to be a lot of buildings which are going to be monuments." Atif went on to say that "Dubai especially is known for its towers and many developed countries have reached a peak where developers or organizations have started to build monuments to themselves, to immortalize themselves, or that which separates them from their competitors. That style has always embodied itself in the form of architecture and the trend of building the highest tower is a trend which architects have to respond to. This is good and bad. Good in the sense that it allows for 'thinking outside the box', bad because it tends to ignore the human aspect of architecture.

For someone who likes to add his own personal touch to the architectural process, Atif is well aware of the challenges imposed by this industry. "The major challenge you face these days is when you are just starting out, are locally based and are a small firm; it is very difficult for people to take you seriously. And when you are working in Dubai it's all about the big projects, so the big developers and people who are behind these master developments are always looking for more established and foreign firms," he explained. He further added, "The second challenge in the UAE is attracting and retaining good talent because there are so many firms out there for people to choose from that job loyalty is low and creates high turnover. The third challenge is coming up with architecture that has some meaning within the very short deadlines that one is given. You have to understand, the market in Dubai is primarily driven by real estate projects which are in the free hold areas and these projects sometimes have to be designed in a very short span of time so that the

developer can sell them before he starts construction. Because land is bought on 10% - 15% of the price, before the next payment is due they want to have the project designed and sold. Another challenge of running a small firm is that you are often overlooked because the big developers are not interested in working with you and you are not able to pay them as much as you could if you were a larger firm."

Despite the challenges that Atif outlined there are no signs of dark clouds hovering over him. The chance to operate an architectural practice keeps him on his toes. He shares his experiences, "It is easy to remain focused on what you want out of a project. You get to develop a strong relationship with your employees. It encourages you to talk to them and remove the corporate barriers that may exist in larger firms." The challenges of operating a small firm do not put a damper on Atif's spirits, they only make him strive to create a name for his firm, and Atif and his partners have been very successful in doing this—they have received publicity from magazines both locally and internationally for the work they have done to date. "Personally when you are in charge of running a small firm one challenge is putting on different hats," Atif elaborates. "How quickly you are able to change from the role of project manager to an architect to HR to a financier because all those roles require you to adopt a different mindset and all this has to be done in a short span of time. This also allows one to be effective and efficient."

Atif can be described as a self-actualized person. He is never satisfied with what he is doing. He explains, "If I was satisfied with where I am I would stop growing. If you are satisfied than that means you have accepted the situation and are happy with where you are. You should always better yourself. Keep looking for challenges, for better horizons so that you can keep progressing."

Atif's words could not be truer. His intrinsic desire to use and develop his talents has proven that something else also plays an important role. "To be successful in everything you need to be patient and compromising. Patience goes a long way and compromise is needed because you can not always get what you want. But if you are patient and willing to compromise you can get your way and you can get through the toughest of situations in architecture as a profession. You may never get what you want because although you designed the most amazing building when you were in university, when you go out there and are faced with real clients you have to be patient with what they want instead of imposing what you want. You need to find common ground. This will attract bigger projects and get your name out there."

# Learning Never Ends

By Shuaa al Assar

Dr. Ahmad Al-Issa is one of the professors who has witnessed the growth of AUS over the past 10 years. He joined AUS in August 1998 as one of the English Department's TESOL faculty. In the Spring of 2007, Dr. Al-Issa was appointed as the Director of the Faculty Development Center (FDC). Dr. Al-Issa's interest and research in the field of cross cultural communication are very compatible with the intercultural environment at AUS – which makes his experience at AUS remarkable and valuable.

Being a member of the AUS faculty doesn't merely mean communicating information to students. It is a process of continuous improvement not only for the students, but also for the professors themselves. This is how Dr. Al-Issa perceives his experience as a professor and a director of the FDC at AUS. "Learning never ends. We are very fortunate here at AUS that our faculty fully understand that. The more qualified a professor, the more interest he or she shows in further developing his or her teaching skills." As the director of the FDC, Dr. Al-Issa believes that AUS established the FDC in the Spring of 2007 in order to enhance this process of learning more professionally. "The FDC promotes teaching excellence and enhances learning practices through open and ongoing discussion among faculty and experts in the area of professional development," Al-Issa explained.

In addition to the experience the professors gain from teaching at AUS, the FDC makes their experience more valuable and more interesting. The FDC's goals are designed to benefit the teaching community, both academically and socially, by encouraging professors to cooperate and share their work, which also reflects on the well being of the students. "The mission of the FDC is the support of the teaching and professional development of all faculty. The FDC sees as one of its major goals, the importance of research for our faculty and giving them opportunities to share their findings and research experiences. The FDC realizes that consistent professional development among faculty is reflected positively on our students' learning."

Dr. Al-Issa has created different strategies and tactics to accomplish the FDC's mission. "I use a variety of events in order to promote and attain the goals and mission of the FDC, these include: workshops,



seminars, panels, invited speakers, etc. Additionally, the FDC offers various services such as individual consultations, classroom observations, statistical support, and instructional technical support through Academic Computing," he explained. In its first full year of operation, the FDC has succeeded in accomplishing many goals. "We were very successful in promoting a wide range of programs in addition to giving faculty a place where they are always welcome to get together and share ideas and teaching tips. We developed an FDC website which has been continually updated and is full of useful information for faculty professional development. Last semester we produced the first FDC newsletter, *The Forum*, which was instrumental in showing the diversity of our faculty and their interests."

The faculty at AUS consists of professors who possess great knowledge and experience in the field of teaching. Nevertheless, they show a great interest in enhancing their skills and learning more. "This is quite obvious in the participation of our faculty at the many FDC events throughout the academic year. AUS has a high caliber faculty who are eminently qualified in their fields and always open to learning about new ideas and concepts that can help them be better teachers, learners, and researchers," Dr. Al-Issa explained. "My term as the FDC director has given me many opportunities to interact and work with faculty from all colleges and schools and I must say it has been an honor. AUS can always be proud of its faculty and their dedication to their teaching, their students, and to their own research and professional development goals."

As Dr. Al-Issa's research interests include cross-cultural communication, AUS presents the perfect working place for him by its unique intercultural diversity. "I strongly believe we are all extremely privileged to teach at AUS. Our campus contains such diversity in terms of cultures, languages, and nationalities. Thus, it



is never difficult to encounter and meet someone from a place we have never been to, or discover someone who comes from a country or culture we have always been interested in knowing more about. Not only are our classrooms diverse, but our own faculty is extremely diverse. Together we all have the potential to continue building this culturally diverse university into an increasingly important institution in the region," he said. In addition to gaining knowledge about other's cultures, Al-Issa considers working in the multicultural environment of AUS very helpful on the academic level. "Understanding our cultural differences definitely has a major positive effect on our

teaching and our students' learning. This is an area that I have written and researched about a great deal. Understanding our students' communication styles, learning preferences, cultural systems of values, beliefs and world views can only ensure a richer classroom environment, which then further translates into a rich intercultural campus atmosphere. Cultural diversity among students and faculty, if it is understood by all, will enhance our understanding and appreciation of our differences. The more we are exposed to different cultures and diversity in our teaching and learning environment, the more successful we become as teachers and citizens of our global community," Dr. Al-Issa explained.

Moreover, being the director of the FDC gives Dr. Al-Issa the chance to experience the intercultural diversity at AUS more closely. "Part of the satisfaction I have from working at the FDC is the opportunity to meet faculty from all over campus. Often we all get so busy within our own departments that we don't take advantage of all the cultures and diversity that we are privy to here at AUS. The FDC has been a wonderful opportunity, not only for me, but for all those who continue to participate in our many events, to meet new faculty from different backgrounds and form new friendships and working relationships that I strongly believe will carry on throughout our years at AUS and beyond," Al-Issa stated. To emphasize the importance of the intercultural mixture at AUS, "I strongly promote intercultural competence and I believe it should be a major component of every class."

Dr. Al-Issa also shed light on his experiences prior to joining AUS and how well it reflected on his current position. "Perhaps one of my most memorable roles was working as a research assistant for Dr. Jerry Gebhard, a prominent scholar in the fields of cross-cultural communication and teacher training, when I was at Indiana University of Pennsylvania," he recalled. "In addition, I

worked at the Office of Language Services at the U.S. State Department in Washington, DC as a language specialist, interpreter, and translator. This particular position gave me an opportunity to meet and interact with people from different parts of the world. This job made me realize the absolute importance of the need for intercultural communication competence in everything we pursue in life." Dr. Al-Issa concluded the talk about his previous experience saying, "I feel blessed to have had an interesting career background prior to joining AUS. I strongly believe that all my past endeavors have had a positive effect on my current teaching and research here at AUS."

Finally, Dr. Al-Issa believes that his experience at AUS is unique and enriching. "I would have to say that AUS is definitely a unique and distinctive place to teach, do research, and encounter cultural diversity." He also pointed out the magnificent growth of AUS since it was established. "I am glad that I have had the opportunity to see AUS grow over the years. I arrived the second year, Fall 1998, and have been privileged to see the enormous growth this university has made in the past nine years. It has been an enriching experience to watch the tremendous changes that have taken place at this institution. The strides that AUS has made, not just in terms of physical spaces, but especially in terms of academic progress and new and innovative programs, has been exciting to watch unfold. Not many people are lucky enough to observe a university grow so rapidly from inception to a world-class institution and I am happy to have taken part in the extraordinary strides this university has taken."

## Where Are You Now?

**Firas Hammad**, BA Mechanical Engineering, Class of 2005 and an MA in Mechatronics in 2008. Firas is currently with Consolidated Contractors International Company (CCIC) as a Material Engineer. He shares the following experience, "Even though I graduated with two degrees from AUS, I have never ended my relationship with my alma mater. In fact, I represented AUS at a conference in Jordan in May 2008. Currently at CCIC, I manage the purchasing of materials for oil and gas projects. I can honestly say that when I look at my career, my education, the skills, and the knowledge I gained, both in my graduate and undergraduate education, AUS placed me on the right track. My educational skills have been tremendously valuable to me, although now I wish that I had paid more attention to my professors. However, no matter which way my future goes, I will always use the skills developed at the American University of Sharjah. It was an exciting time to be part of AUS."

# A Family Affair

By Deena Qassem

Rola, Ahmed, and Ossama Faour are three siblings who graduated from AUS, each with a different major, and a different set of academic experiences and expectations. The three siblings attended the same university yet each had a different set of formative experiences, and came away from the university with a different set of expectations about life. For each of the Faours, however, AUS was a major turning point in life. Rola, Ahmed and Ossama each believe that AUS helped them and changed them in ways that will affect them throughout their lives.

Rola, a graduate of the School of Architecture and Design, is the oldest of the three, and now works as a graphic designer at THE One, a design firm in Dubai. Her talent and creativity, combined with the discipline, skills and experiences that she attained at AUS, made her who she is today. However, Rola always looks beyond the present, and works towards new dreams and challenges. "I always have new expectations in life that I try to reach." In ten years, Rola is planning to have a small business that goes beyond graphic design.

Ossama, on the other hand, believes that thinking ten years ahead is unrealistic. His timeline is limited to five years, during which he plans to become a marketing manager. Ahmed agrees with his brother's belief that the future doesn't need to be planned, as it comes soon enough. With a smiling face and an optimistic outlook Ahmed notes that he hasn't yet achieved all of his goals; however, he believes that he will in time.

As a student, Rola was anything but average. She spent her university years studying and working hard to achieve a high GPA. Rola wasn't worried about anything but her studies. Having fun was not her main priority, and although she had many friends, Rola's main concern was with her grades. Today the creative graphic designer has grown to become a more experienced and mature woman. Besides working as a graphic designer, Rola is now more active and has balance in her life. She now believes that one's social life is as important as one's academic or professional life. She believes that in order to live happy and healthy a person should strive for balance and a social life is what brings meaning to the rest of one's life. "Time is precious. People should find a balance between their careers and their social lives based on



their priorities, but they should never let work overtake their social life." For some of us, however, succeeding both socially and professionally seems to be impossible. Some people neglect their friends and social lives; they finish their work at the office, but continue to work at home! They don't have any 'Me Time'. According to Ahmed, these people are getting it wrong. "I think if you play it smart then you can have both."

## Where Are You Now?

**Samer El Gamal**, BS in Computer Engineering, Class of 2003. Samer is a Mobile Services Coordinator with Etisalat. Samer states, "I am back at AUS, commencing my graduate studies (or should I say we are back ...). Back to a place, that is not only an institution, but a story and a life. AUS shaped my character and made me the person I am today. At AUS I learned how to accept, tolerate, listen, and understand others' beliefs, cultures, and needs. Moreover, the most important contribution of AUS to my life was introducing me to the most adorable lady I have ever met and who is now My Wife. At last, being the man who I am right now, with the great friends I have and most importantly the fabulous lady beside me, I would say "Thank God, I am Proud !" Samer married Hana, alumna of the College of Engineering. Hana is also pursuing a master's degree at AUS.



According to Rola and her brothers having a very high GPA will not necessarily guarantee someone a good job. However they do believe that it does empower a student with a higher sense of self esteem. "It does not really matter what GPA you achieve since it always comes down to your ability to handle 'the real world' with your skills," claims Ossama. However Rola says that her high GPA made her more confident on a personal level. All three Faours believe that, in the end, having good communication skills is what really matters when job hunting. "Knowing how to communicate with others is the real challenge. Having leadership and communication skills will enhance your abilities and your value at work," says Ahmed.

Although AUS has high academic standards, superior facilities and skilled professors, the university is continuously involved in a process of improvement. Rola, Ahmed, and Ossama are fascinated by the rapid evolution of AUS in the short period of time since they each graduated. As Rola notes, "AUS has expanded and developed greatly since my time, as compared to when my brothers were at school, which wasn't so long ago."

AUS affects students in both direct and indirect ways. In addition to its high academic standards, AUS graduates its students with a high sense of self-esteem. AUS also prepares its graduates for their careers, and helps them to adapt to the cultural diversity that they will find at work. The three Faours greatly benefited from AUS' great mix of cultures and nationalities. Today all of the Faours work in Dubai, an emirate whose inhabitants come from around the globe. According to Ossama, the youngest of the three, the cultural diversity at AUS gave him a much better understanding of people's psychologies. Rola claims that the cultural diversity at AUS has increased her cultural tolerance and acceptance of the "other." Ahmed encourages Arab students to attend AUS because according to his own experience, "it provided me with a valuable American education without losing my Arab identity."

Ahmed learned a great deal while at AUS. He believes that in addition to an American education, AUS taught him how to make the right decisions and how to be responsible for those decisions. Ahmed said that he is grateful that AUS provided the foundation for his current success, as it prepared him to manage his current career and social life. Ossama thinks that AUS has played a major role in his career; he believes that his company's managers and those responsible for hiring

people care about a potential employee's personality and that "what AUS did for me, was to instill a sense of self-confidence in myself." He also believes that AUS graduates "should be confident about their job skills and about what they can accomplish in their future careers, more than their ability to achieve high grades at school." When asked about the most important thing he learned while at AUS he responded, "To be frank every single moment was an experience that I learned from. AUS taught me to think of the impossible as easy." Rola believes that AUS taught her how to respect her time and work. She said that "being an AUS student has certainly helped me with being where I am today."

Rola's advice to new students at AUS is to get the most out of their experience. "I know the Bowling Center is tempting, but try to spend more time studying in order to deserve the title of an AUS graduate. Find that balance between work time and social time and always BE IN THE MOMENT."

Rola, Ahmed, and Ossama Faour are three examples of traditional AUS graduates with three different orientations; the hard working student, the fun going student, and the responsible student. The three siblings are thankful to God and their loving parents who have supported the trio as they became the woman and men they are today. "Without them, we wouldn't have made it anywhere," said Rola.

## Where Are You Now?

**Omar Shorbaji**, majored in Computer Engineering, Class of '2007. Omar is a Sales Engineer with Nortel. Omar states, "Over the past six years I have been assisting businesses in using technology to simplify how employees communicate—both among themselves and with their customers. I currently am a Sales Engineer with Nortel—a global firm that provides communications technology. In this role, I travel throughout the Gulf—bringing the firm's IP Telephone and Unified Communications solutions to potential clients. I advise clients of the benefits of these solutions and how businesses can readily adopt these technologies. When not traveling, I juggle between family (my wife Safaa and the ever more demanding two-year old Jude) and pursuing my MBA from the Manchester Business School." For fun, you might be able to catch him blogging, making home videos, or scheduling a horse-riding session.

# AUS Pioneers Honored

A celebration was held at the Chancellor's residence to honor pioneer faculty members and staff who joined the American University of Sharjah at its inception in 1997. Chancellor Thompson gave each pioneer a commemorative plaque to thank them for their contributions to AUS during its early days.





# A Passion for Teaching

By Ramzy M. Shuhaiber

There are some professors that go above and beyond their call of duty, making sure that their students understand the information presented in their lectures rather than just memorizing the information they gathered. Dr. Harris Breslow, who teaches public relations in the Department of Mass Communication, is one of those professors.

After growing up in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, Dr. Breslow graduated with a B.A. in Political Science and History from Concordia University. "I've always been interested in politics and history. I think we learn from our past, and to grow we need to know and appreciate our past." It is quite clear that Dr. Breslow's degree has helped him in his work in the Department of Mass Communication. "It is interesting to see how politics is affected through the mass media – magazines, TV and newspapers, and now the Internet and the World Wide Web, and how things are framed—which is exactly the kind of thing that PR focuses on."

After Montreal, Dr. Breslow made a big step in his career by moving to New York City. Known to be a fast-paced city, Breslow got a sense of what the real world had to offer him. "It was fun, but three years there was more than enough. I wanted to live life in the fast lane and the experiences that I had during those three years have helped me understand how serious everything is in respect to the real world, and they've helped shape what I teach in my classes. Nothing is worth teaching if it doesn't help my students in the real world. They need to be able to stand on their own two feet when they leave AUS and I take the best of my personal experiences and I base my decisions on them."

Dr. Breslow then moved on to a quieter, more studious life at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It was there that he earned his Ph.D. in Communications specializing in Philosophy and Cultural History / International Political Economy in 1994. While writing his dissertation Breslow also



taught at the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma, from 1993-1995.

In 1995, Dr. Breslow moved back to his home country, Canada, to teach Communications at York University. He is one of the founding members of the graduate program in Communications and Culture at that institution. "The program is jointly offered with Ryerson University and was immediately considered to be one of the leading programs of its kind in Canada at the time of its inception."

After six years of teaching, research, and publications at York University, Dr. Breslow decided to pursue a career in the private industry and headed for Vancouver, on the Canadian west coast. During his time in Vancouver, he authored the first study of Global Civil Society, which was presented to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. During this time Breslow was self-employed as a Communications Consultant specializing in target audience research and analysis, communications design, and public relations writing. He had a wide array of clients ranging from major petroleum firms to those in the finance and technology sectors. Eventually, "I became employed as a communications executive at several tech start ups on the Canadian west coast. It took a while, but I finally settled down to a less hectic life, and took a steady office job working for a single company."

Dr. Breslow feels that his professional background helps him in his classes. "My experience allows me to

offer a new perspective on the things that I teach my students – I have seen the theories work in reality. I know what works, I know what doesn't and that knowledge allows me to communicate with my students much more effectively."

After working in Vancouver from 2002—2007, Dr. Breslow realized that he wanted to go back to teaching, his first love. He joined the AUS faculty in Fall 2007 and although he has been here for less than a year, he has made quite an impression on his students, who already look up to him as their mentor, some even as their friend. "At first, I was unsure of moving to the United Arab Emirates, but then a fond memory made its way back to me. I was here once a couple of years ago doing a presentation in Abu Dhabi, and I was overwhelmed by the kindness and the intellect that people of the United Arab Emirates possessed. I remember going back to Canada and telling my friends that I just needed to find a job here. And now that I have been living and working here, I do not want to leave!" Without a doubt, the AUS family is lucky to add such a well respected and admired professional to our faculty.

"I have big plans for the Public Relations program here, at the American University of Sharjah, says Dr. Breslow. I may be the only Public Relations professor for now, but the truth is that I am working for one of the best educational systems with the most enthusiastic students I have ever worked with. I am proud to be working for an organization that gives their students the fantastic opportunities that AUS has to offer."

"I try to maintain a real-world atmosphere in my lectures, and I think that is partially the reason behind my students' motivation. I make my lectures as real as possible so that my students are ready to face a real-world work environment when they graduate." Dr. Breslow's passion for teaching his students is evident in his classrooms. "A lot of the time, I am so moved by their focus and dedication to their assignments, be it in-class or take-home, that I feel as though I am running my own public relations empire! A prime example would be when I receive emails from them at four in the morning."

In addition to his passion for teaching, Breslow is an avid hockey fan/player, and a hard-core Formula 1 fan who has attended 28 Grand Prix races worldwide. Last, but not least, is his love for photography. "I have many hobbies and things that I am passionate about. I think that it is important that I incorporate these things in my lectures. I believe that if I share my passions with my students in the classroom, they too will share their passions with me, which in return will allow them to incorporate that into their own work."

"I enjoy working at the American University of Sharjah, and I think I am going to be here for a long while."

## Where Are You Now?

**Rashed Saidi**, Class of '07, BA in International Studies. Rashed currently holds the position of Senior Researcher at the Presidential Affairs Ministry, Local Affairs Department. Rashed states, "I am so pleased that I studied at AUS. It helped enhance my leadership capabilities and turn my potential into real achievement."

## Where Are You Now?

**Joseph Al Ghoul**, Class of 2007, BS in Electrical Engineering (with a GPA of 3.89), and a minor in Applied and Computational Mathematics (with a GPA of 4.0). Currently works with General Electric International and moves between Qatar and New York. Joseph Al Ghoul summarizes his AUS experience, "After spending four years at AUS, it is clear to me that AUS is ideal for people who have tremendous potential and seek opportunities for advancement. The overall environment opens doors for future careers, and it certainly helps young graduates evolve into mature adults, ready for the workforce. I received invaluable educational experience that readily translated into employment related skills. I served as a Research Assistant in the Electrical Engineering Department, and a Teaching Assistant in the Mathematics Department. I had the opportunity to serve as President of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Student Branch at AUS, along with many other opportunities. I was able to organize a study tour in Malaysia, serve on the steering committee for events in Engineering, work as a contributing editor for the "Realms" literary magazine, in addition to the chance to participate in athletics and debate. I received the Sharjah Islamic Bank Award for the Best Student Research and for the Best Senior Design Project Award of IEEE and I also published two research papers."



# An International Woman

By Ehsan Fahmi



Working at the United Nations for three years, Anita Akkawi is now an Administrative and Logistics Associate with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security stationed in Dubai. Anita was always interested in political science and international relations, and holds a Bachelors Degree in International Studies (IS). Having been an AUS student for four years, she was inspired by a number of events and people.

Of Lebanese origin, Anita was born in Dubai and has lived there her whole life. Growing up, Anita always had a passion for politics.

In high school, she would sit and compare news channels on TV and read the newspapers in order to analyze and criticize what she had seen and read. "I remember in high school I used to annoy my parents, because I wanted to compare the same news on different channels or in various newspapers...to see how the same message was presented differently," Anita recalled. This was how she knew that a career in politics was where she "would find herself."

Joining the American University of Sharjah in 2001, Anita was on her way to achieving her dreams. Unfortunately, International Studies was not offered at that time at AUS, so she had to make do with studying Economics. During her second year at AUS, the International Studies major opened up and Anita eagerly and readily applied for it. Despite the fact that International Studies was not exactly the same as Political Science, Anita was satisfied nonetheless. "I found myself there, because my aim was to be in the field of politics so I could have a political role in this world," Anita smiled.

Spending four years studying in the field she fell in love with when she was little, Anita enjoyed the multicultural diversity of AUS. She enjoyed the exciting debates and arguments that occurred during her classes. "The arguments in the politics courses made us fight all the time. Hearing a person from a different nationality and culture argue made me look at things differently," she explained. She still maintains contact with some of her professors, in particular, Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah. Anita was her student and worked with her as a research and teaching assistant. "I always looked up to her, because she is someone I wanted to end up like," Anita proudly stated. Dr. Mourtada has always supported and inspired her and they are close friends now.

After completing four fascinating and tough years doing what she loved at AUS, although far from politics, Anita joined the United Nations in July 2005, only a month after she had graduated. "The UN was what I wanted. It was the UN and nothing but the UN," she firmly stated. Prior to starting her career, Anita had worked with the UN World Food Programme voluntarily for six months in the Fundraising Unit. "It was interesting and it gave me a different perspective of the world, because you see the other side of the world that you are not aware of, like starvation and illnesses, and ever since, my life has changed," explained Anita. After those six months, she realized she wanted to do much more. Finally, in early 2006, she joined the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) – Logistics Office.

The Logistics Office is a global office in the UNDSS and is based in Dubai. This office supports over 120 DSS offices all over the world. From Dubai, the office provides security and safety services in terms of equipment to all the

DSS staff in the world. "Our main mission is to equip the DSS staff with the necessary basic safety equipment in order for them to operate in different countries," Anita stated. "We also respond in times of crisis, for example, the earthquake in Pakistan, the tsunami in Indonesia, the wars in Lebanon and Iraq, unsafe situations in Sudan, Somalia, and Afghanistan, etc." Anita works to provide equipment such as anti-landmine vehicles, body armour vests, helmets, sleeping bags, satellite phones, book laptops for the field and anything related to the safety and security of the DSS staff to them globally.

"Not every day is routine at my work, because every day is a challenge and something will go wrong somewhere in the world," Anita smiled. "I wake up every morning eager to go to work, knowing that today is another day and that it has nothing to do with the day before." Anita's email is her most important source of knowledge about what is going on in the world, because most of her work is done via this medium. Her job can be very tedious and requires a great deal of concentration and effort. The focus of her work is primarily to respond rapidly by sending out the necessary equipment in a timely manner, follow up on the logistics of the operations, the status of the shipments and to make sure all the resources arrive in good condition. Anita is also involved in asset management, which consists of controlling the inventory of all the country offices. "It might sound simple, but trust me when I say that, it is much easier said than actually done," she added.

The multicultural diversity of AUS has prepared Anita for her working environment. "Walking into the UN building alone is multinational; you have people from all over the world. It is another world in that building," Anita described. Being a part of AUS's cultural diversity made her learn to be more culturally sensitive to the cultures she deals with in the UN. Anita has

learned how to communicate culturally in her working environment and this is extremely important because a part of her job is to deal with a variety of cultures and diverse ethnicities. "I love what I do," Anita stated.

Anita has brought many memories of AUS with her to the UN and she will never forget her time on the campus, which she remembers in almost idyllic terms. "I miss the university life because life is so much easier at school. If you can always be a student be a student, because once you're out you're out," Anita stated. "If you mess up in school it's your own responsibility, but if you mess up at work the responsibility is completely different."

The arguments and debates are another fond memory of what Anita misses so dearly. "International Studies at AUS is an excellent major to pursue if you are analytical and critical, but you have to be sincerely interested in it, because it is not easy," Anita advises the future IS students. Anita has completed three years with the UN and plans to pursue her Masters in Political Science or in Public International Law in the future while working in another country with the UN. "I am sure I will not always be based in Dubai, eventually I will move to another UN office in the world. However, I definitely do not want to leave the UN, because once you're in you never want to leave."

Anita's biggest role models are her parents. "None of this would be happening without the constant encouragement and support of my parents," Anita stated proudly. "My parents are special because they have never stood in the way of anything I wanted to do." She may have future plans to get her Masters degree, but for now it's dealing with crises for Anita Akkawi.

## 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.