

# AUSconnect

## Ruler of Sharjah Celebrates UAE National Day on AUS Campus

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Member of the UAE Supreme Council, Ruler of Sharjah and President of the American University of Sharjah (AUS) visited AUS on December 4. His Highness visited the AUS campus to attend celebrations marking the 36<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UAE National Day, which were organized by the Emirati Cultural Club at AUS.



The main theme of the two-day event was unity. Students built a pavilion on the AUS plaza, which was divided into seven sections, each representing an Emirate. The pavilion housed traditional products of the country, and was designed to introduce Emirati heritage to the faculty and staff of the university.

On the occasion, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, commended the students for celebrating the occasion with such fervor, and for their deep understanding of the nature of the UAE federation. He called on all students to learn from the UAE federation and its success, which is unique in the Arab world. The Ruler of Sharjah also emphasized the lessons learned from the UAE experience, in particular educating and nurturing citizens in order to build the country.

The ceremony was also attended by Sheikh Sultan bin Ahmed Bin Sultan Al Qassimi, Chairman of the Sharjah Trade and Tourism Development Authority, and Vice President of the Sharjah Petroleum Council, as well as by Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdullah Bin Mohammad Al Thani in addition to senior university officials.



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# AUS Takes Part in Global Conference on Role of Universities in Climate Change



On November 28 and 29 the American University of Sharjah participated in the third annual Global Colloquium of University Presidents. The two-day event was held in New York City, at New York University (NYU) under the auspices of Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, who delivered the opening address. Former US President Bill Clinton was the main speaker on the event's second day. AUS was the only university from the Arab world to participate in the event. Chancellor Winfred L. Thompson was among a distinguished group of university leaders from around the world especially invited to participate in the colloquium.

"In addition to boosting our institutional profile amongst a worthy group, the conference was very beneficial as well in focusing campus attention on energy conservation—as well as other environmental issues—which is bound to become a more important issue at AUS over the next few years," said Dr. Thompson. Chancellor Thompson also noted that "Bill Clinton's informative address focused on his climate-related initiatives. The event also provided me with an opportunity to visit briefly with my fellow Arkansan for the first time in several years." Each year the conference explores two issues: universities and their role in the society, and a specific public policy challenge. This year the public policy challenge that was addressed by university presidents and faculty experts was "The Role of Universities in Relation to Climate Change," and "Setting the Post-Kyoto Agenda for Climate Policy." Some 50 university

presidents and faculty experts representing 27 universities from around the world were in attendance. Professor Michael Oppenheimer of Princeton University, a renown expert on climate change, delivered the keynote address, entitled "The Post-Kyoto Challenge: Can Policy Catch Up with Science?"

The Global Colloquium is a growing network of international university presidents who contribute to the solution of global public policy problems through research, teaching and other activities. The presidents of NYU, Columbia University, Yale, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania and the President Emeritus of Harvard University sponsor the colloquium.





# Welcome Home!

By Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah

Assistant to the Chancellor for Development & Alumni Affairs

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. We are all aware that AUS was founded and developed under the aegis of His Highness Dr. Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of the American University of Sharjah. We are indebted to His Highness' vision and honored by his faith in our abilities and our commitment. Our Tenth Anniversary Reunion is but one testimony to His Highness' vision that our graduates would be the "crown jewels" of the American University of Sharjah. 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 generation of alumni to have succeeded at the highest standards in all walks of your lives.

As you know, I recently assumed the responsibilities of the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, which is now attached to the Office of the Chancellor at the American University of Sharjah. I truly cherish that a principal duty of mine is to be the first person that you, the alumni contact with your alma mater. It is especially gratifying to me to be one of AUS' first ten faculty members in 1997, and to be writing to you now, a decade later, knowing that nearly 3000 students have graduated. Most of all, it is truly exciting to be part of the grand project that is AUS—that is, to create a world-class institution, and to see our work bear fruit among a young but exceedingly distinguished alumni.

You, the graduates of AUS, have "hit the deck running." Many among you have already garnered international recognition—as you will readily note in this issue of *AUS Connect*. Each and every one of you makes us proud, and I know that you will continue to do so in the future.

Development happens rapidly in the UAE, and this is especially so at AUS. Since September, we have had a string of activities that speak to AUS' fantastic dynamism. One needs only to be on campus for a few days to feel the contagious enthusiasm among the students, staff and faculty. I am confident that AUS graduates will carry this enthusiasm with them wherever they go, and whatever they do. It is an enthusiasm born of collegiality, and nurtured by the faculty and staff who have prepared you for your adult lives, armed with intellectual tools of the highest caliber.

This enthusiasm clearly impacts Alumni Affairs as well. Our Abu Dhabi Initiative *Iftar*, our first public event in October, brought together 273 graduates in the Abu Dhabi chapter. Active Alumni Association chapters



are being planned throughout the Gulf and beyond. Wherever your lives take you, across the four corners of the world, you will find friends ready to greet you and to host you, and you will remain connected to AUS.

The Office of Development and Alumni Affairs is currently establishing a database to help you keep in contact with your friends and colleagues.

In the future we would love it if you took the time to share your recent accomplishments, either of a professional or personal nature—and ideally both. No doubt you will want to share your promotions, new business ventures, new family members, and your travels with your fellow alums. We will keep you posted on events and opportunities at AUS. The biographical profiles in the Alumni Directory already speak to the considerable amassed expertise. These profiles will make available to you a multitude of information that will help you in the ventures that you may undertake. Our alumni are especially active in all walks of life—internships, suggesting improvements, connecting with one another, forming partnerships of various sorts and so on. Clearly, your time at AUS does not end with the diploma but speaks to a lifelong belonging.

Welcome back to your alma mater; Welcome Home!

*Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah is the Assistant to the Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs. She joined AUS when the university opened its doors in September 1997. Until last year Dr. Sabbah 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. Sabbah 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 Board of Trustees Approves Pioneer Scholarships

At its regular fall meeting the American University of Sharjah's Board of Trustees announced its approval of funding for ten Pioneer Scholarships. The Pioneer Scholarships, which have been established in recognition of the University's tenth anniversary, are valued at AED one million each. These scholarships have been made available through the generosity of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council, Ruler of Sharjah and President of AUS. The Pioneer Scholarships are intended to function as a matching grant program, whereby His Highness will match donations from private individuals and groups who create scholarships for students who excel at academic pursuits and are in need of financial assistance in order to attend the University. In discussing this important new initiative Chancellor Winfred Thompson noted that "the cost of attending AUS is a significant obstacle to many deserving students." Chancellor Thompson further elaborated by saying that. "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."

Additionally, the Board of Trustees created a new Resource Development Committee, which is charged with the responsibility of cultivating private support for the university and its students. Members of this committee include Trustee Hamid Jafar, Trustee Abdul Jalil Darwish, Trustee Maroun Semaan, and Trustee Joseph Brand.

## Inaugural Sheikh Khalifa Scholarships Awarded

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The Sheikh Khalifa Scholarships are awarded to outstanding juniors and seniors on the basis of academic excellence, leadership potential, community service, participation in extracurricular and university activities and demonstrated talent in a student's field of study. The winners of the first Sheikh Khalifa Scholarships are:

- Lamiyah Bahrainwala and Rami Hamadeh, College of Arts and Sciences.
- Kholood Khoory and Waleed Mazen Hashem, School of Architecture and Design.
- Sadaf Fasihnia and Alaa El-Dien Ali Hamade, School of Business and Management.
- Nada Aji and Joseph El Ghoul, School of Engineering.

## Where Are You Now?

**Nitin Gogia '05** is currently enrolled at George Washington University in its International Affairs Program, with a Middle East concentration.

## Initial Petrofac Scholarships Awarded

On October 1, 2007 AUS announced the names of nine students who would be the first to receive Petrofac Scholarship awards. The Petrofac Scholarships were established from the proceeds of a US\$ two million donation made to the university by Petrofac, one of the largest engineering and construction companies serving the hydrocarbon industry in the Arabian Gulf Region. The scholarships are awarded to students who are citizens of the countries in which Petrofac operates, and who are in their junior and senior years in the College of Engineering. The Petrofac Scholarships, which are awarded yearly in the fall semester, provide up to 50 percent of the winners' tuition fees. Winners of the Petrofac awards must have attained academic excellence and have demonstrated the honor, integrity, leadership and service to others.

Mr. Maroun Semaan, President and CEO of Petrofac International Ltd., and a member of the AUS Board of Trustees, presented the awards and congratulated the students for their achievement. "We look forward to continuing our mutual cooperation and assure AUS of our support in its leading role in the development of the UAE and the region," said Trustee Semaan. AUS Chancellor Winfred Thompson, who was present at the awards, expressed his gratitude and appreciation for Petrofac's generosity. "The AUS Endowment Fund is greatly improved through partnerships such as this with Petrofac. They help AUS achieve its objective of becoming a leading research university in the region," said Chancellor Thompson.

The first winners of the Petrofac Scholarships are Asif Rana, Kareem Shaheen, Mooud Nasr, Soudeh Ahmadian, Sulaiman Mehfooz, Huda Muhammad, Moein Shayegannia, Rana El-haje and Muahmmad Ali.



# Governor of DIFC Speaks at AUS

The American University of Sharjah hosted H. E. Dr. Omar Bin Sulaiman, Governor of the Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC), who spoke on the Arab capital markets and their future challenges on November 25.

Dr. Sulaiman's talk covered many topics of great importance to Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, and the greater Arab world. In particular, Dr. Sulaiman discussed Dubai's "roadmap" to the future, which the DIFC Governor described as consisting of three parts: the transformation of Dubai into a business center and "hub of all hubs" to the creation of a knowledge economy, and "exporting knowledge and intellectual property. We need to work on developing our UAE national labor market and at the same time attract smart people and businesses and create clusters of economy." As examples of this, Dr. Sulaiman discussed Dubai Internet City, Dubai Media City, Dubai Knowledge Village and Academic City. Dr. Sulaiman stated that "Dubai is no longer a one-man show. It is now an institution where the main vision and strategy is set and it is up to teams and leaders to deliver what is expected of them."



A key to Dubai's success has been its commitment to diversification, which Dr. Sulaiman addressed at length. "Dubai does not have many resources compared to others in the region. So we looked at diversifying its resources. Under the late Sheikh Rashid Bin Saeed Al Maktoum Dubai turned into a trade and a business center. His highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Prime Minister and Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, looked further to diversifying its resources by introducing tourism. Dubai is turning into a large aviation hub: Dubai's airport caters to more than 30 million passengers, while the new Jebel Ali Airport will be able to absorb 120 million visitors."

Dr. Sulaiman also discussed the "spillover effect," which he described as one method among many to spur growth and competition within the region. "You can call it the jealousy factor, as well. We want to make our neighboring countries more competitive so that they are spurred on to outdo us. The whole region benefits when we all individually do better. Of course, we always want to be number one."

A question and answer period followed the DIFC Governor's speech. During this time Dr. Sulaiman answered many questions from students, telling them to "always focus on your achievements and not on becoming a CEO or a manager. Try to create a track record of achievements, whether you are the best cleaner of floors or the best director of world companies."

Dr. Omar Bin Sulaiman is the representative for DIFC affairs for His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. Prior to this Dr. Sulaiman was the Director General of Dubai International Financial Center Authority, during which time the center established itself as the first international financial center in the region and the fastest growing such institution in the world. Dr. Sulaiman has also led the development and launch of the first international financial exchange in the region, the Dubai International Financial Exchange. Dr. Sulaiman holds a Doctorate in Leadership, an MBA in Finance, an MA in Education and a BSC in Industrial Engineering.

## AUS and Cambridge University Sign MOU

The American University of Sharjah has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with the University of Cambridge. The MOU concerns the collaboration and interaction between their respective researchers and graduate students in the fields of water engineering and petroleum engineering.

The MOU also specifies the creation of positions for two senior research associates. The two research associates will be based at the University of Cambridge and will be in residence at AUS for 16 weeks per year. The two positions are to be funded by endowments of USD one million. These endowments are to be established and funded through the generosity of Dana Gas PJSC and Sharjah Electricity and Water Authority (SEWA).

# A Message from the Alumni Association President

Dear Fellow Alums;

It is with great pleasure that I write to you today. As you know, it has been my privilege to represent you in the capacity of President of the AUS Alumni Association for the past two years. As I write this, the Association has reached a major turning point in its development as an organization. Full-fledged elections are under way, and AUS alumni from the pioneering graduating class of 2001 to the most recent graduating class of 2007 are participating. In an initiative that reflects the Board of Trustees' interest in strengthening the bond between AUS and its alumni, the Board reviewed the Alumni Association's provisional constitution at its meeting of November 17, 2006. This constitution will be further reviewed before attaining final approval from the Board.

These achievements have been made possible as a result of the hard work and dedication of a great deal of our alumni, whom I have the great privilege to thank for their support, and for the trust that they have invested in the Association. I would like to take this opportunity to shed some light on their continuing efforts during the past few years.

The evolution of the Alumni Association can be divided into three distinct, yet overlapping phases; Awareness, Recognition and Advancement. The goals of each phase were directed towards the establishment of a strong, prestigious and highly proactive Alumni Association.

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## Awareness

The awareness phase was aimed at raising the level of understanding of the word "alumni" within the AUS community. The highlight of this phase was the reunion dinner for the Classes of 2001 and 2002. This event, held on December 29, 2005, was a turning point in the Association's development and an important event for its future. This event was held, for the first time, under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah and President of AUS, who also attended. His guidance has been enlightening and inspiring, and he continues to entrust us with his vision for AUS' alumni to "excel in society in providing an example for the upcoming generation."

## Recognition

This second phase was aimed at attaining recognition for the Association's role in channeling the needs and aspirations of its members. The Association has been keen to reach out to our alumni, and numerous meetings have been organized for, and attended by, AUS alumni from throughout the region. As a result, approximately 120 members from different classes and academic units have met to establish a draft document that describes the Alumni Association's purpose and goals. These meetings have facilitated the preparation of the Association's constitution, which will provide the Association with the legitimacy we all wish it to attain.

The next challenge for the fledgling Association was to win the trust of the Alumni who have been looking past the Association's conventional functions. Intending to



set a benchmark for the standards we wish to achieve, the Association hosted its first networking event; an Annual Gala Dinner that was held at the Mina A' Salam Ballroom in Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai. The event was an achievement by any standard, and its success provided a great lift to the Association. Over 250 alumni, eager to interact with one another, to greet old friends, and to make new ones, attended this very heartwarming event.

In response to requests from our alumni who reside in Abu Dhabi, a team of Abu Dhabi alums began a chapter initiative in the country's capital. The initiative coordinated an *Iftar* during the holy month of Ramadan in October this year at the Beach Rotana Hotel and Towers in Abu Dhabi. With the attendance of more than 250 alumni, the *Iftar* proved to be a resounding success!

More importantly, the Abu Dhabi initiative reflected the true nature of the alumni's interest in reconnecting with both their alma mater and their fellow alums. With chapters and representatives in Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Iran and Canada, and with work underway to expand to the United Kingdom, the Eastern United States, the Indian sub-continent and Africa, the Association looks forward to more chapter initiatives, which truly represent the international spirit that we enjoy at AUS.

## Advancement

The Board of Trustees has now officially recognized the Alumni Association, and it enjoys a growing reputation of success as a result of its ongoing success and the dedication of its members. Members of the Association were pleased to learn of the establishment of the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs in recognition of the Association's growing significance. This office is directly attached to the Office of the Chancellor, and it has been entrusted to Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah. One of the primary purposes of this office is to ensure the continued vital growth of the Alumni Association and to aid in facilitating its activities, both in the UAE and abroad. The AUS Alumni Association looks forward to working with this new office.

Having acquired the trust and confidence of the University, the Board of Trustees and, most notably, our



fellow alumni, it is time for members of the Association to take the next step. It is time to move the Association to the point where it can continuously serve the needs of its alumni in an effective manner. To this end, we expect to conduct numerous events and activities in collaboration with the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs. These events will include an Alumni Seminar Series, the Tenth Anniversary Reunion, an Alumni Contact Directory and the Yearbook. The Association will also work to provide its members with services that fulfill their needs and interests. We are, for example, in the process of integrating InCircle, an online networking software suite that is dedicated to serving the alumni. The Association is deploying this very powerful networking software suite in order to facilitate both the professional needs and social interests of the alumni.

The AUS Tenth Anniversary Alumni Reunion will mark the beginning of a new phase in the Association's

history. This prestigious event, which will host the largest number of AUS alumni at a single occasion, is intended to commemorate the vision and endless support that His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi has bestowed upon the Association. It is very notable that His Highness will honor us with his presence at our reunion dinner, which is held under his aegis, and with his support.

Finally, I would like to urge you all to take the reins in your hands. It is up to all of us to take the initiative by taking an active role in both fostering and presenting AUS' best product—you, its alumni!

With Warmest Regards and Fondest Memories;

**Mahmoud Ghaith**  
President, AUS Alumni Association

**Dr. Nawar Al-Hassan Golley**, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Arabic Studies, has edited *Arab Women's Lives Retold: Exploring Identity through Writing*, published by Syracuse University Press. This important volume does much to dismantle the much bandied about view of Arab women passively accepting roles that are simply dictated by others.

**Dr. Joseph Gibbs**, Associate Professor of the Department of Mass Communications, has authored an historical detective account of a legendary pirate of the Caribbean, in *"Dead Men Tell No Tales: The Life and Legends of the Pirate Charles Gibbs"*, published by the University of South Carolina Press, 2007.



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## Thurber Addresses AUS on American Elections and the Gulf

On October 8, Dr. James Thurber, Professor of Government and Director of the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies at American University in Washington, D.C. spoke at AUS. Dr. Thurber's lecture was entitled "The 2008 US Elections and Middle East Policy."

In his lecture Professor Thurber explained the nature of the interrelationship between the war in Iraq and American energy policy. Dr. Thurber went on to discuss the centrality of these two issues to the American Presidential and congressional elections to be held in 2008. The lecture detailed how the nature of President Bush's declining popularity due to the failure of the Iraq war and the effect that this has had on Republican Party candidates, many of whom are avoiding being seen as too close to President Bush's policy on the war. During his talk Dr. Thurber outlined the relevance of the elections for countries in the Gulf region, stating that "The election is relevant to the Gulf states because of the candidates' positions on Iraq, Iran, and oil." Dr. Thurber further noted that "The leading Democratic Party candidates, Hillary Clinton and Barak Obama, are focusing on ways to redeploy US troops out of Iraq."

Dr. James Thurber earned his BS in political science from the University of Oregon, and his PhD from Indiana University. He has been an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow and has worked on four reorganization efforts for committees in both the U.S. House and Senate, from 1976 to the present. Dr. Thurber has been the Director of the Human Affairs Research Center of the Battelle Memorial Institute, in Washington, D.C. and has served as acting Dean of the School of Government and Public Administration at American University in Washington. Dr. Thurber is the author of more than 75 articles and chapters, as well as numerous books. His most recent book is *Campaign Consultants, Political Parties, Interest Groups and Voters in American Elections* (with Candice Nelson and David A. Dulio, 2005).

### Where Are You Now?

**Ayla Qadeer '06** writes to tell us that she is currently living in Chicago, where she is an MA student in the Humanities program at the University of Chicago.

More than 100 students and faculty members attended the lecture, which was moderated by Dr. Richard Gassan, Assistant Professor of History, and Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Assistant to the Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs.

# BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Abdulla Al-Shamsi's education in the Department of Architecture at AUS can be seen as an experience born of a sense of space, which is quite apropos for someone who has chosen architecture as his profession.



On the one hand, there was the strong sense of fellowship and collegiality—a sense of closeness engendered by the space of the open studio—which Abdulla experienced while an AUS student. “It was pretty challenging. We had to spend hours and hours... working to closing time, working on weekends,” recalled Abdulla. “There was a nice culture to the open space of the studio; working around people who were senior and junior to you. Talking with people who went into other programs after the first year, and seeing how other fields work. It was very interesting and it aided in one’s progress as an architecture student,” he said.

On the other hand, the relative uniqueness within the region of AUS’ Department of Architecture lent an aspect of intellectual isolation to Abdulla’s experience. “The School of Architecture and Design at AUS is one of the few in the Middle East where architecture is part of a school of design, and not part of a school of engineering,” he explained. “That, in itself, adds a lot to the program. Instead of thinking, ‘I’m an engineer,’ you think, ‘I’m an architect.’ It changes your thinking about architecture. In the Middle East an architect is often an engineer; more practical and scientific, but at AUS it’s more about instinct and creativity, and I found that this made a big impact on things—it changed your mentality.”

Added to this is the fact that AUS is so far geographically from the main currents of the architectural world; a fact that Abdulla was very sensitive to. “People tell me that AUS is one of the best schools in the region, but it’s hard to get a sense of that while you work there. We work in isolation because of our location—unlike in the U.S., where you can easily visit other schools and go see what they did or are doing.” This left Abdulla with a sense of doubt about his education and his own work. “I was left wondering: ‘How good are we? How good are our standards?’ All you have to go on is what people

around you say. There is no comparison to the outside, and so no tangible feeling about how good the work is that we do; of what the level of standards or our school really are, compared to elsewhere or to international standards.”

Abdulla’s first clue that AUS’ Architecture Program was as strong as he had hoped came when he was accepted to several prestigious graduate schools of architecture in the United States. From these schools he chose to attend Columbia University in New York City. Attending Columbia had incredible benefits for Abdulla’s work, not the least of which was the strong level of talent, and the huge range of professional diversity, among the Masters students in the program. “The range of people who are your colleagues in your studios and classes... from people who graduated a month ago to people who have ten years experience, and some who already have their own offices, and some who have worked with star architects. So you have the luxury of interacting with different people, different personalities and different backgrounds and living experiences that enrich one’s academic experience.”

Much like his time at AUS, Abdulla found that his interaction with his fellow Masters students was an education in and of itself. “You learn a lot from your colleagues; through what they do, their technical skills—basically at the Masters degree everyone has something to offer. From that aspect there was a very competitive edge to the program,” he recalled. It was in Columbia’s competitive environment that Abdulla first realized how strong AUS was with respect to other schools of architecture around the world. “At Columbia we went through the first semester, and from the second semester onward we knew each other’s work. That’s when I could see that I was competing for top positions among the students instead of bringing up the rear.”



Aside from the rich interaction within the program, Columbia afforded Abdulla the opportunity to interact with architects from around the world. "At Columbia there was a very rich lecture series where you could hear visiting architects from all over the world. Just going and hearing them speak, it was very inspiring. You could meet all these people and talk in person to people who you'd read about in books, and see the work they do. And then you go back to design, and it gives you an extra push to achieve more than you thought you could."

Abdulla brought his experiences back to Sharjah, where he set up his own architectural practice, SHAPE. He chose the name SHAPE in order to be thought-provoking, through the name's sense of ambiguity. "I enjoy the fact that it can be either a noun or a verb," said Abdulla. "In architecture we tend to use the term 'form' and avoid the word 'shape', so I thought that I would just put that out there, because in the end architecture is about shape... it's about the shape of a building and the way that a building shapes its environment," he explained.

The sentiments found in SHAPE's name are reflected in Abdulla's goals for his practice. "I'm interested in unique projects other than the typical. You know; maximum floor space, maximum rent, minimum walls, getting the most economy out of it. I'm interested in clients who want something out of the ordinary rather than the typical commercial projects which are massed produced, and which are more a part of the mainstream of the market," he explained. "I try to be picky about the clients and projects that I choose. I try to add more to the design than just commission a plan, and a nice 3-d view and get the project over with."

These sentiments are reflected in Abdullah's refusal to confess to a specific design aesthetic or orientation. "I wouldn't say that I have a specific style, but I am interested in what direction contemporary architecture will head in. I'm interested in what will differentiate twenty-first century architecture from that of the twentieth century," he said. "At the moment there is no 'mainstream' style to architecture that people will go with. What distinguished the postwar era from other eras, especially in the United States, was steel. Steel buildings, steel construction, and then curtain walls. That was the 60s and 70s. Then, when you see a postmodern building, you immediately recognize that that was a product of the later twentieth century."

Although there is no specific design orientation within contemporary architecture, Abdulla did note that there were socially influenced trends concerning the nature of construction, and that architecture will have to respond to these trends. "One thing for sure is that green architecture and sustainability are coming more and more into play as people try to limit greenhouse gasses and waste. This will be more dominant in the twenty-first century. As well, zero carbon emission buildings will become more dominant, particularly as the technology is further developed and improved. So there's no certain style, but these are very big concerns and they will be addressed."

Working outside of the market's mainstream is a challenge for any person involved in creative work, and no less so for Abdulla. "It's very difficult in the beginning.

You have to challenge the client and the budget and the typical mentality." Things do, however, seem to be easing somewhat as a result of the huge explosion of construction that began in Dubai and is now sweeping across the UAE. "In the boom of the last few years people are more interested in design. It's no longer simply about which architect charges the lowest fee, or which architect has built the most buildings. Now design sells. Instead of selling a building for x amount, people have come to realize that you can sell it for x plus a certain additional percentage because it's been designed by a world-class architect," he explains. Abdulla went on to say that "I think that really helps architecture in the UAE because it causes people to think about design and to look for more interesting designs. Architecture was market driven, but people began to realize that if a building is a landmark that it can sell for much higher."

A second challenge for Abdulla is that SHAPE is a sole practice. This brings with it both benefits and challenges, which Abdulla outlined. "It's much easier to determine an orientation and a direction to the work of the shop. When you're alone you set the direction and you follow that direction. When you have partners every partner has an equal say, and it's more difficult to determine a direction. It's hard to choose a partner who has the same vision and direction as to how things should go." Abdulla, perhaps thinking back to his time in the open studio at AUS, did point out that "on the other hand, partners can be very helpful. If you have a partner he can push you if you're slacking off; he can keep you on track if you lose your sense of direction on a project, and vice versa. When you're alone you have to push yourself."

Having gone through the AUS architecture program, and then competed successfully at Columbia, Abdulla is no stranger to pushing himself and proving himself. Indeed, he sees this as the nature of both life in general, and architecture in particular. "Every step is more difficult than the previous. In graduate studies everyone comes from a top school and has got good marks and is talented, and quite often professionally experienced as well," he pointed out. Then you get to your professional life and you have to prove yourself again. You have to compete with people who are coming from all over the world to design here in this area. Often you are competing against offices that employ hundreds of people and that have numerous branches around the world. So how do you get a piece of the pie? It becomes very difficult," he said.

Nothing worth having ever comes easily. This is no less true for a young architect than it is for anyone else. "In the long run if you struggle in the beginning but keep a certain focus and a certain vision, I think that in the future this will help you out. It will help you to attain bigger projects and to get your name out in the market. I think that it's worth it. I know in the next few years it's going to be very difficult, but it will pay off in the end."

## Where Are You Now?

**Adib Fahim '07** has been accepted to New York University, where he will soon be starting work towards a Masters degree in Public Administration.

# Research with a Purpose

Dr. Wael Saleh, who is a research scientist in the Microwave Imaging and Nondestructive Evaluation Laboratory (MINEL) in the basement of the Engineering Building is the first AUS graduate to receive a Ph.D. Dr. Saleh received his degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Exeter in 2007 for his research on a novel way of using microwaves for the detection of breast cancer at its very earliest stages of development. In many ways his achievements and success are in lockstep with, and mirror those, of AUS. This is because Dr. Saleh has been at AUS since the university's inception. Said Wael of these early years, "When I arrived at AUS it was a desert. There were only a few buildings. The whole thing was in the Chemistry/Physics building and the Business building. The administration offices were in the Business building. From this we started our journey together."

Two years after Dr. Saleh began his education at AUS his future mentor and Ph.D. co-advisor, Dr. Nasser Qaddoumi, arrived on campus. "Dr. Nasser Qaddoumi has been with me from the beginning, for eight years," said Wael. "He knows my work from A-Z. He has advised me on every idea, on every word that I have written and paper and thesis that I have produced. He is one of the greatest people whom I have ever met. He is my academic father, and I am very thankful for his mentorship and support." The relationship between the two men began to bear fruit almost immediately, for Dr. Saleh was soon named a recipient of one of only eight awards given around the world. "In 2000 I was the only student from the region to receive an IEEE award, the IEEE Antennas and Propagation Society Undergraduate Scholarship, for my work on a novel technique for corrosion detection and thickness evaluation in metallic structures. This technique has a number of applications in different environments such as the petroleum industry."

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Wael finished his undergraduate work at AUS in the spring of 2001. Dr. Saleh then began his graduate studies. This time, however, his work was carried out at two campuses. Dr. Saleh began his Ph.D. at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom while his research was conducted at MINEL. His work was under the supervision of both Dr. Nasser Qaddoumi, Director of MINEL at AUS, and Dr. David Wright, Director of Research at University of Exeter. When asked if carrying out his work and moving back and forth between two different schools on two different continents was difficult Dr. Saleh pointed out that two things made it possible; strong advisors and self-motivation. "It all depends on one's advisors. My advisors, Dr. Qaddoumi here at AUS and Dr. Wright at Exeter, were very friendly and helpful, and their supervision was not rigid and inflexible, but rather responsive to my work. In the end, however, it all depends on yourself. You have to do your work on time, and do it efficiently and well. This is no different for anyone, anywhere else," explained Dr. Saleh.

Dr. Saleh's work came under the direct support of two men whom he described as very essential to his work. "His Highness, Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohamed Al Qassimi and Mr. Hamid Jafar have supported me and my work," said Dr. Saleh, who went on to say that, "Of course, AUS exists because of His Highness' vision and generosity, and my work is a part of AUS. Mr. Hamid Jafar's generosity both financially and with his time has also been of instrumental importance to me," explained Wael. "Along with His Highness, Mr. Jafar has co-sponsored my research. Mr. Jafar has followed my work from the beginning, and has given me advice on what I should do, and how I should proceed. All that I have accomplished since I began my graduate studies here at AUS has been because of Allah's blessings and the generosity of these two men. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to both Sheikh Dr. Sultan and to Mr. Jafar from the bottom of my heart because who doesn't thank people doesn't thank Allah."

His devotion to family and community lead Dr. Saleh to begin his work on the nondestructive and very early detection of breast cancer. Dr. Saleh explained that "I enjoy working for charity, and I enjoy being philanthropic. I chose to work in this area because I wanted to give something back to the people of Sharjah. We have a Friends of Cancer Patients Society (FOCP), which is headed by Her Highness, Sheikha Jawaher Bint Mohammed Al Qassimi, Honorary President of FOCP, the wife of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, the Ruler of Sharjah. The President of the Friends of Cancer Society is Mrs. Sawsan Jafar. I wanted to thank these people for their support of my work and to give something back to this community in some charitable and philanthropic way, and this seemed to be a natural fit. Research is meant to serve the community. This research does so by helping our mothers, our sisters and our daughters, as well as others who suffer from this disease."

Aside from the obvious social benefits to the earliest possible detection of breast cancer, Dr. Saleh also described the particular benefits of the technique that he is developing with Dr. Qaddoumi at MINEL. "Each technique has its disadvantages. Our work adds to that of others, it doesn't replace anything. It will be a complementary first stage screening tool. There are many advantages to the technique. It is economical compared to an MRI; it avoids the hazards of radiation associated with mammograms; it is pain free; and it is non-invasive, there are no surgical procedures such as those found when biopsies are required."

## Where Are You Now?

**Hind Al-Muttawa** '01 has recently been promoted to the position of Section Head within the Network Analysis Department of Sharjah Electricity and Water Authority, and has started an MS in Engineering Systems Management at AUS. Hind has also started a young family, and has two children, Rashid and Eman.



Despite the fact that he and Dr. Qaddoumi can see the end results of this work, Dr. Saleh understands that there is a great deal of work ahead for him. "We are still at the foundational stage," Dr. Saleh explained. "This is an essential stage, for if you don't have a proper foundation it all comes crashing down. My Ph.D. thesis is the foundation, it's not the end of the story." Dr. Saleh put things into further perspective by noting that "I have been working on this research for more than five years. Research needs time. Not a day, or a month, or even a year."

Along with time, Dr. Saleh points to the fact that while his work has been successful to date, his research will need additional resources—namely researchers and equipment. While Dr. Saleh is extremely grateful to His Highness and to Mr. Jafar for their generosity and their ongoing support of his work and of MINEL, he believes that other members of the community could also cooperate. "The work that we are doing requires teamwork. Equipment like an MRI unit doesn't come from just one person. Moreover, we can't develop the whole thing by ourselves; we will need equipment, and we will need graduate students at the MS and PhD levels. If you are limited in your support you are limited in your output."

In comparing MINEL to other research centers around the world Dr. Saleh noted that "Research centers in this field in North America and Europe are supported by many institutes and organizations such as the National Institute of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and many other organizations. These centers have equipment and have many graduated PhD and MS students. Our lab is only five years old. We are very young and our resources are limited, but we are doing the work. Our group is the only group in either the Gulf or the Middle East that is working on developing a technique for the use of microwaves in the detection of breast cancer."

Dr. Saleh has received a number of awards and accolades for his research on breast cancer detection. These include the Young Scientist Bursary Award at the Conference on Precision Electromagnetic Measurements (CPEM 2004), London, UK, where only 20 scientists were chosen from

across the world. Wael was the "Youngest Researcher" at the Fifth UAE Diagnostic Imaging Conference held in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Additionally, he was a presenter at the Britain's Top Younger Engineers presentation, where Dr. Saleh was among 95 of Britain's top young research engineers from both university and industrial research laboratories who presented their work at the House of Commons. As well, Dr. Saleh was the only scientist from the UAE to receive a "letter of invitation" from the conference chairman to attend the 10th International Symposium on Microwave and Optical Technology, in Fukuoka, Japan.

The outcome of Dr. Saleh's research is timely and extremely pertinent as it can supplement the efforts of the breast cancer awareness activity carried out under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak, who has established the Higher National Committee for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research. After his successful completion of his PhD, Dr. Saleh received the Best Paper Award at the Fourth IEEE GCC Conference held in Bahrain for a paper that he co-authored with his advisor Dr. Qaddoumi. Moreover, the Advanced Technologies Research Institute (ATRI) at University of Exeter honored Dr. Saleh with an award for being the best post-graduate candidate based on his or her research merit.

Although there is a long way to go before his research results in a finished product, available on the market, Dr. Saleh is confident that the work going on in MINEL will ultimately be successful. One thing that gives Wael confidence is the success that Dr. Qaddoumi has had in fostering students and preparing them for advanced degrees in Electrical Engineering. "This lab has produced many graduate students. All of them received scholarships to pursue their graduate studies. Some have received their MS degrees from the University of Missouri-Rolla in the United States; some from Leeds in the U.K., from the University of Manitoba and Concordia University in Canada and from Technical University in Munich, Germany," Dr. Saleh pointed out. "And now there are four students originally from this lab who are working on their Ph.D. So I was the first Ph.D.," he went on to say, "but you will soon see in the next two-three years four more Ph.D.s in Electrical Engineering who began their careers here at MINEL."

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## New York Academy of Sciences Officials Visit AUS

On Thursday, October 25, AUS Chancellor Winfred Thompson met with Dr. Beatrice Renault and Mr. David Clay, representatives of The New York Academy of Sciences (NYAS) to discuss AUS' participation in an ambitious science initiative that includes both NYAS and the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT). HCT and NYAS had earlier signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the details of the initiative. Also present at the meeting were Dr. Mourtada-Sabbah, Assistant to the Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs; Dr. Malcolm Richards, Dean of the School of Business and Management; Dr. Yousef Al Assaf, Dean of the College of Engineering; and Dr. Nasser Hamdan, Professor of Physics.

The goal of the MOU is the creation of a UAE Science Alliance. The MOU specifies an ambitious agenda on the part of the proposed Science Alliance. Included in the MOU are the establishment of fellowships for UAE scientists to visit the NYAS and its partner organizations in the United States; the inclusion of UAE scientific institutions in a future Scientists Without Borders initiative; the organization of career-mentoring activities for science-oriented Masters, graduate and post-graduate students, young investigators and junior faculty; and the establishment of an NYAS oversight council for the Middle East/Gulf region.

# COMING FULL CIRCLE

When Anna Ray, first arrived on the AUS campus her plans didn't involve sticking around for very long. Her plan was to live at AUS with her parents while finishing her last year of high school and then returning back to the United States to start her university studies. "When I first came here I thought that 'I'll have fun for these ten months and then I'll go home.' So things were fine; they were easy."

Anna's original plan, and one reason why the Ray family moved to AUS from the United States, revolved around her desire to spend her senior year abroad. "I was a significant reason for the family's move to AUS. I had always wanted to be an exchange student, but my mom always told me 'no, that's what you do in university,'" As luck would have it, AUS advertised a job opening for the position of head librarian, and Kathy Ray decided to apply. Anna explained that "My dad had wanted to make a career change, but my mother's job is very specialized, so she had to be the one to look for a job. Mom got tired of my dad's wanting to make a move, so she applied for the Head Librarian's position at AUS, not really expecting anything to happen." However, Kathy found herself under consideration for the position. Things became

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more and more serious as the application process progressed and Anna pushed things along as much as she could. Anna laughed while she recalled that "it was I who really pushed for the move, since I could spend my senior year abroad; so we moved. My senior year in the Middle East; I may not have known anything about it, but I knew that one day it would make a great story. 'My senior year in the Middle East.' That's really why I did it—for the bestseller."

Once the family had relocated and settled in, things seemed to go according to Anna's original plan. Anna attended Dubai American Academy (DAA) for her senior year while Ron and Kathy became ensconced in their respective positions at AUS. However, as her senior year went on, Anna found herself making a mid-course correction and applying to AUS. Said Anna, "For a number of reasons, but mostly because I didn't know what to major in, my parents suggested that I stay here, so that I could figure things out."

While the AUS campus had been her home, it had not been her school. The move from DAA to AUS, and the change in her plans, caused Anna to experience a transitional diversion. "It was fine to spend my senior year being amazed by Dubai and Sharjah," said Anna. "I had seven weeks to hang out with my friends in California, and when I came back, that's when the transitional bump hit me." Anna pointed out that the university's diversity, which is such a highly valued part of the AUS experience, can also be a little intimidating. "When I came back to AUS for my freshman year I wasn't around my California friends, and I wasn't around my American high school expat friends. There was a completely different mix of people, and a completely different environment. Although I was fine with the decision to attend AUS, I was also adjusting to a huge number of changes."



The transition from DAA to AUS wasn't the only source of Anna's diversion. Anna also found herself caught between two worlds. She explained that "part of me hadn't yet accepted the transition. Part of me wanted to be online finding out what my friends back home in California were up to—so the transition wasn't only about getting used to college and the reality of AUS. The challenge was also about adjusting to new people, and adjusting to the fact that I wasn't going home to go to school."

As with many people, Anna's transition eased when she began to make friends at AUS. "That first year at AUS I made a friend who was here from Georgetown," she said. "That friend was the one who got me into the food, the music and the people from AUS and the region."

## Where Are You Now?

**Atif Khawaja '05**, and **Omran Al Owais '06**, graduates of the School of Architecture and Design, were recently featured in the internationally recognized and circulated *Metropolis Magazine* for their creative design of the *Warqaa Courtyards* in Dubai. Both architects are now associated with Dubai-based Centimeter Cube Thinkspace.



As she began to make friends and grow comfortable with her surroundings Anna's outlook slowly started to change, and AUS began to seem more like a home to her. "I remember thinking, 'Ok, it is cool here.' It took me a while to get to this point because I still had one foot in California, and I still hadn't really committed to life here at AUS." As she grew more comfortable with her surroundings, Anna grew more comfortable with AUS' diversity, which had once been challenging. "I realized that there was a whole different side to what I had seen. I slowly changed my perception of things. I realized that there were new experiences that I could have, and that I could learn things from a different angle," she said.

Although she lacked a strong focus at the start, Anna *did know* that she wanted a career that involved travel. This led her to choose International Studies as her major. "I knew that I wanted something that would allow me to travel and do interesting things," explained Anna. "International Studies gave me the opportunity to explore a number of areas of interest, which would allow me to find a future focus. It was at the end of my first year at AUS that I thought to myself, 'The Middle East is so interesting,' and I decided that I wanted to make the Middle East the focus of my studies."

Towards the end of first year at AUS Anna also decided to study Arabic intensively. One of the leading programs in the United States was at Brigham Young University (BYU), in Anna's native state, Utah. BYU offered a six-week intensive Arabic immersion program. "The summer between my two years I went back to the U.S. and studied intensive Arabic so that I could really soak up AUS. My first year had been such an adjustment. I finished high school and moved to AUS, and I was taking my time meeting people and getting used to things."

During this summer trip Anna noticed that something in her had changed. "I found it very hard to go back. It took me three weeks to get used to it. Things like adjusting to weekends. And I felt as if I didn't fit in, which is unusual, because at AUS I also felt as if I didn't fit in." Much to her surprise, Anna discovered that what had originally been so daunting to her about AUS, its diversity, had now become something familiar and welcoming. She

explained that "the conclusion I came to was that the culture at BYU was very homogenous, and I had been abroad, whereas at AUS there is a great deal of diversity, and I discovered that I fit in at AUS precisely because I was different. I felt that at BYU there was a mold to fit in to, whereas at AUS things are just so diverse."

Anna's return to AUS was a much more comfortable experience. Her classes were more interesting to her, and her life at AUS had become much more familiar. "My second semester in my second year was great," said Anna. "I had done my generals and now I was taking courses in Arabic Heritage and Arabic literature, and other subjects to do with the Middle East."

Anna's interest in Middle East studies has lead her back to Utah, this time to the University of Utah, where she specializes in the subject. Anna notes that, "Going back to Utah after my second year at AUS I felt that things made much more sense more easily—that I had much more insight. We study things in class—the history of the region, the conflicts, its culture—and I have a context to put things into. For me, it's not just about names and dates. I've been there, I've met people from these places, and I've heard a variety of perspectives on these topics, and not just from people who are scholars."

Anna has also learned that, unexpectedly, AUS has come to be her home. Coming back for her Christmas break has been, in many ways, like the closing of a circle in Anna's life. "Now I consider AUS to be home, more than California," said Anna. "Partly because my parents are here and my room is here.... And I don't know what I'll do if they ever leave, because I have come to realize that this is where my friends are too. This is where I feel comfortable and where my place is. It's fun to see people here, and to see AUS again. It's where I feel most comfortable. I feel a huge sense of gratitude towards AUS; the people, the professors who have helped me to get ahead, and a sense of gratitude that I was enabled to go back to the U.S. and pursue a new course of study. I also feel a great sense of gratitude towards my peers; they made me feel so comfortable at AUS, and they're the reason for my major and my enthusiasm for it."

## Close to 300 Attend Alumni *Iftar* in Abu Dhabi

Some 300 AUS alumni attended an *Iftar* at the Rotana Beach Hotel and Towers in Abu Dhabi on Thursday October 4. The Abu Dhabi Chapter of the AUS Alumni Association hosted the *Iftar*. This highly successful event was the first event organized by the Alumni Association for its members this year. Also in attendance at the event were Dr. Winfred Thompson, AUS Chancellor, Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Assistant to the Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, and senior members of the academic administration.

"As the first graduates of our young and dynamic institution, these alumni carry both the privilege and responsibility of serving as our ambassadors to the business world and to their circles of families and friends," said Dr. Mourtada-Sabbah. "I am very impressed by the high level of attendance at this *Iftar*, especially since this was the Chapter's first organized event. It is a wonderful success and a testament to the hard work of the Abu Dhabi Chapter of the Alumni Association." Dr. Mourtada-Sabbah went on to say that one of the key functions of the *Iftar* was to "ensure a connection with our vibrant body of young alumni, to keep them informed of important developments and to provide an effective channel of communication between the alumni and the university."

The *Iftar* featured a raffle for a number of Air France/KLM return tickets to Paris, as well as a number of seats in AMIDEAST/AUS management training courses, which are always in high demand.

## MCM Students Raise Awareness of Social Issues

On December 16 students in the Mass Communication Department held an awareness campaign in the gallery of the New Academic Building. The campaign was held as part of an advanced media production course. It covered three specific topics: global warming, poverty and autism. Five groups of students worked on designing posters, advertisements and multimedia presentations on these three topics.

"Most of the students taking the class are seniors about to graduate, so it was a good idea to ask them to work on campaigns that would touch on public service topics and human interest issues rather than simply selling a product," said Anna Milena Gavassa Cortes, Instructor in the Mass Communication Department. "This project got them more involved with what is happening around the world. It was not done just for fun."

Fady Kiriakides, whose group was tasked to raise awareness of poverty, said that his group decided to focus on poverty and its effects on children. "We did not want to focus on any one ethnic group or a certain area. We've learned that poverty is a much bigger issue than we expected and I think that it is our responsibility to spread awareness about this issue and to do something about it," he said.

One of the students who was part of the group that worked on global warming, Rabab Khan, said that the group wanted to portray the issue in a "cool" way in order to capture students' interest. "The message we were trying to send through our posters is that everyone is guilty of pollution and of causing global warming," she said.

**Dr. Mourad Barkat**, Professor of Electrical Engineering, received the distinguished honor of being elevated to IEEE Fellow of The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

**Dr. Said Faiq**, Professor of Arabic Studies, organized the international conference "Betwixt and Between III 2007: Globalization, Interculturalization and Translation." The conference was co-hosted by the College of Arts and Sciences at AUS and Queen's University in Belfast, and was held at the Radisson SAS Hotel in Sharjah on November 28.



**Dr. Rob Bateman** Chair of the Public Administration Program, organized the International Conference on Quality in Public Affairs Education, from December 7-9. Faculty from more than 20 nations participated in panel discussions and workshops focusing on ways to improve the ability of public service education to meet the needs of both developed and developing nations. Zayed University and the Dubai School of Government were co-hosts. Shuaa Capital contributed support as a co-sponsor.

## Engineering Tomorrow

Mechatronics is the latest field in the world of engineering. While it is the youngest of all the fields of engineering, it is one of the biggest things to have recently happened to the world of engineering. Mechatronics is about engineering the future.

It is the combination of multiple engineering fields: electrical, mechanical, control, and computer engineering. In the words of AUS Mechatronics Professor, Dr. Mohammed Amin Jarrah, "Mechatronics is the combination of the control, mechanical, electrical, and computer engineering. Recently mechatronics has been considered one of the top technologies that will shape our future." Shaping the future is no easy task, and while this clichéd saying has been heard before,

mechatronics is different. Simply put, mechatronics matches its execution with its ambition. It utilizes existing technologies and fuses a wide range of existing technologies to create unimaginable products and services that are not only beneficial to engineers, but also to the average citizen.

One question that is asked whenever anyone is introduced to something new, is "Why?" "Why choose



mechatronics?" "I chose Mechatronics because I am interested in more than one field of engineering. For instance, working on a robot – there is the design side, the programming side, the building side, but with mechatronics, we are involved with all the sides", said Amer Al-Radaideh, a 24-year-old Jordanian student doing his Masters in Mechatronics at AUS. Mechatronics enables engineers to access multiple engineering disciplines simultaneously, which in itself opens up room for more experimentation and possibilities. Mechatronics students study a wide range of disciplines and are much more versatile than students of any other engineering field. Another thing that mechatronics has that no other engineering field can match is the number of jobs that have recently opened to Mechatronics graduates. Mechatronics grads have five times the chances a single-field engineering grad would. Mechatronics grads can be hired to work in a control, electrical, mechanical, computer, or even better, a mechatronics engineering position.

AUS has offered both an MS and a Graduate Certificate in Mechatronics since 2002. One of the more interesting developments in AUS' Mechatronics program is the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV). The UAV is an air vehicle that is set to fly without the involvement of any human being inside. During the fall of 2002 a ready-made UAV without the program was given to students in the Mechatronics program to test and tinker with. Less than five years later, during the spring of 2007, the Mechatronics students at AUS decided to design their own model. The first AUS-based UAV, called the AUS-UAV, was designed by an Algerian mechanical engineering student named Ramzi Kaiache, who headed a team of four in the successful design of the first prototype of the AUS-UAV. With the design completed, the next task was to develop the software for it. Under the supervision of Dr. Jarrah, a team of mechatronics students was tasked with writing the software for the AUS-UAV. The software controls "the Avionics Unit, which is used to monitor the flight parameters of the aircraft while flying, GPS/INS (Global Positioning System/ Inertial Navigation System) Integration, and of course the auto piloting function," said Radaideh, who will be responsible for the auto piloting guidance and path following of the UAV. Laith Sahawneh will be responsible for the avionics unit. Tareq Abu Hashem and Hamad Al Ketbi are in charge of the

GPS/INS integration. The team has been hard at work since spring 2007, and hopes to wrap everything up by the summer of 2008. Currently, the team is applying an auto-piloting function to the design in addition to greater functionality. Even though the UAV project is huge, its goal in the end is simple: to fly on autopilot; in other words, to make an autonomous flying vehicle at a low cost, along with integration within the AUS multi-agent system. The AUS multi-agent system refers to the integration of a number of unmanned vehicles on land, sea, and the sky. This is what the team wants to achieve by next summer.

One might wonder, "Are they enjoying their time with this project, or suffering under the ambition?" Rest assured; the members of the team find their project rewarding as well as informative. "This project is challenging, but that is to be expected. Without challenge, we can't achieve great things. However, it is fun and interesting because it consists of programming, control, electrical, and mechanical operations – this is what Mechatronics is about. It is a great experience for an engineer!" said Radaideh. It is not surprising to hear that such a major project comes with challenges, but it is interesting to hear what these challenges are. "What is really challenging about this project is that as engineers, we learn about plenty of theories – 5 years of it – but this project requires plenty of work in applications, which unfortunately, we are not used to, but we learn!" said Radaideh.

It would be a shame if such an interesting and important project as the AUS-UAV would go unnoticed by the public. This won't happen thanks to its planned appearance in a multitude of upcoming events. In April 2008, it will be shown at the DBF (Design, Build, and Fly) competition at the United States for its second time. At the first showing the AUS team ranked in the top 50. The AUS-UAV will appear in June 2008 at the ISMA 2008 Mechatronics Symposium in Amman, Jordan, where Radaideh will present the AUS-UAV research reports. The AUS-UAV will make another appearance in the US on June and July 2008 at the AUVSI (Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International) competition. Of course, AUS itself will host its usual engineering open day, coming up next on September 2008, where the AUS-UAV will be on display. Last but not least, the UAV will appear in the well-known Dubai Air Show in Dubai, in

November 2009. Even if engineering isn't your thing, mechatronics is still something special—the AUS-UAV alone has its many uses. It will provide the army with a tool that is capable of surveillance of national borders, reconnaissance of enemy territory, remote targeting of potential enemy or aerial targets, as well as other services. The AUS-UAV will provide the community with many services, such as: tracking speeding vehicles, which means less accidents; supporting humanitarian missions for providing relief supplies after natural disasters, which means better lives and less pain for survivors; crop dusting, and much more. The possibilities are limitless. Blending four engineering fields in order to engineer the future itself – that is what mechatronics is all about.



# AUS and Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum Sign MOU



The American University of Sharjah and Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum signed an important memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Wednesday, November 7. The Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum is the Emirate's initiative for encouraging and building the skills of UAE nationals. The purpose of the MOU between AUS and Sharjah *Tatweer* forum is to enhance cooperation between the two institutions in order to develop specific skill sets among Sharjah's young leaders, and to initiate programs and projects that foster partnerships and enhance the competitiveness of the Emirate.

Dr. Winfred Thompson, Chancellor of AUS said that "We are pleased about the opportunity of working with Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum to promote the Emirate's competitive advantages, assist in the development of human capital and support joint cooperation between the private and public sectors. The alliance with Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum will also provide our students with exposure to ambitious initiatives as well as hands-on experience of working on various projects undertaken by the forum through internships." Chancellor Thompson added that "This agreement comes as part of AUS' objectives of becoming a center of research, serving as a resource for the community and contributing to the intellectual traditions as well as the economic progress of the nation. We look forward to working closely with Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum on various initiatives to achieve our common goals."

According to the agreement, AUS will provide consultation, research, technical assistance and institutional support to Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum—in particular with regard to capacity-building and human resource development of young leaders. Both parties will jointly undertake to organize a number of conferences, workshops and specialized lectures and seminars in order to examine current developments, trends and best practices in capacity-building and human resource development.

Members of Sharjah *Tatweer* will also be granted access to the AUS library, and the enormous resources found on the university campus. Sharjah *Tatweer* forum members will also be able to participate in, and attend, events, conferences and specialized seminars that are typically reserved for AUS faculty and students. The Forum will also make use of the campus facilities, the university's academic staff and student volunteers.

"This partnership with AUS is part of a series of agreements initiated by Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum to utilize the best available academic institutions as well as other international and local organizations to support the objectives of the forum, hone the skills of Sharjah's emerging young leaders and encourage wider cooperation between the various sectors of society. It is an honor for Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum to be associated with a prominent institution such as the American University of Sharjah," said Mohammed Abdullah Bukhatir, Acting Chairman of Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum, during the signing ceremony.

Wherever possible Sharjah *Tatweer* will promote the university as a sponsor of its activities. Sharjah *Tatweer* will also nurture a number of AUS students as interns who will work on various programs, projects and events. Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum will also provide AUS students with access to a wide range of networking access across various industry sectors that are of benefit to both the university and its student body.

Nasser Akram, Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum Board Member and Head of the Forum's Academic Committee said that "We have been committed to introducing innovative ways of engaging our members in fruitful activities that will provide them with a well-rounded experience. We believe that our cooperation with AUS will present a wealth of opportunities to develop local talent. The reputation of AUS and the chance to interact with students will help promote the ideals of Sharjah *Tatweer* and provide access to the ideas of youth for enhancing the competitiveness of Sharjah."

Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum is an initiative formed under a decree issued by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council, Ruler of Sharjah and Honorary Chairman of Sharjah *Tatweer* Forum to boost the involvement of Sharjah's young talent and encourage competitiveness in the public and private sectors. The signing ceremony was also attended by Salem Al Qaseer, Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs, Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, Assistant to the Chancellor for Development and Alumni Affairs, and Mahmoud Ghaith, President of the AUS Alumni Association.

## 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 [alumni-affairs@aus.edu](mailto:alumni-affairs@aus.edu). We look forward to hearing from each and every one of you.