UMass Lowell Signs Partnerships with Turkish Universities

In July 2010, Chancellor Marty Meehan and Provost Ahmed Abdelal led a delegation to Turkey to sign partnership agreements with Bahcesehir University, Bilkent University, and Yeditepe University.

Collaborations with Bahcesehir and Yeditepe universities will include assistive technology programs and summer joint MBA electives, as well as faculty and student exchanges. An agreement with Bilkent University will feature joint research projects and publications, including work by graduate students at the partner institutions.

All the agreements emphasize faculty and student exchanges, opportunities for paid internships and development of joint degree programs. Cooperation in academic and research programs will include nanotechnology, bioengineering, medical device development and the UMass Biomedical Engineering and Biotechnology Ph.D. program.

“Going beyond what each university can do by itself will create a new generation of decision makers, entrepreneurs and leaders who can compete and collaborate with the best in the world”

— Chancellor Marty Meehan on the importance of giving students global experiences.

Cultural exchange is an essential and innovative aspect of the mission of the UMass Lowell Middle East Center. Therefore, the Center is honored to host an exhibition of contemporary Egyptian art entitled, Nile to the Merrimack—A Selection of Contemporary Art from Egypt. This exhibition will focus on digital work, both still and time-based—providing students an opportunity to understand their own work in an expanded and global context. It is being planned by Professor Stephen Mishol, UMass Lowell, Professor Jim Jeffers, UMass Lowell, Curator Rasha Ragab of the Museum of Modern Art, Cairo, and Wael Kamal, Modern Sciences and Arts University.

This exhibition results from partnerships established on the UMass Lowell delegation trip to Egypt led by Provost Ahmed Abdelal. The UMass Lowell delegation included Provost Abdelal, Dr. Paula Rayman, Director of the Middle East Center, Professor Steve McCarthy, Plastics Engineering, and Professor Steve Mishol, Painting. Dr. Mustafa Kamal, Director of the High Institute of Applied Arts graciously hosted the UMass Lowell delegation. Dr. Kamal is a leading Egyptian artist and his son Walid is a recognized leader in media and film. The visit to Dr. Kamal’s school was a highlight of the trip and led to the innovative art exhibition.

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Excellence and Equity in Education: Research Collaboration between Lowell, Belfast, and Haifa

For three days in June, two UMass Graduate School of Education (GSE) faculty members launched a new initiative with four international peers, two each from Israel and Ireland. Their goal: come up with a plan to help public schools set in challenging environments.

“Our goal was to identify evidence-based practices for school improvement that can be led by school-level folks — teachers, principals, parents, students, community members — and to then design intervention strategies to assist communities in improving their schools,” says UMass Lowell Professor James Nehring.

Joining Nehring and his GSE colleague Professor Stacy Szczesiul were two professors from Haifa University in Israel — Professor Lily Orland-Barak and Professor Rivka Eisikovits — and two from Belfast’s St. Mary’s College at Queens University — Professor Martin Hagan and Professor Frank Hennessy.

While the collaboration was initially the result of already-existing relationships between the University and each of the other institutions, it makes sense for the three teams to work together on this project.

“All three countries have diverse populations with some groups that are privileged and others that are marginalized. This inequity expresses itself in student learning outcomes between privileged and marginalized groups,” Nehring explains. “Also, all three countries regularly perform in the middle or lower on international indicators of student achievement among developed nations.”

The innovative June summit — which included visits to Lowell High School, Daley Middle School in Lowell and University Park Campus School in Worcester — “changed all of us and has set us on a trajectory for an exciting multi-year project,” he adds. In the next phase of collaboration, the researchers will identify evidence-based practices for school improvement and design intervention strategies to assist communities in improving their schools.

At the end of the three days, the Belfast-Haifa-Lowell Educational Research Group also completed a research proposal it intends to use to apply for grants from external funders.

UMass Lowell and University of Haifa Attend Summer Institute for Peace Education

Last fall, Chancellor Marty Meehan and President Ben-Ze’ev of University of Haifa signed a partnership agreement that included jointly developing a Peace Studies degree. In June, delegations from each university attended the week-long conference at Notre Dame University on “Teaching Peace in the 21st Century.” It was led by George Lopez, Chair of the world-renowned Kroc Institute for Peace Studies. Over 60 participants from 19 institutions were in attendance, including Jeff Helsing, Deputy Director of Education for the United States Institute of Peace. Jeff and his colleagues have offered to collaborate with UMass Lowell on the development of the Peace and Conflict Studies program.

Peace and Conflict Studies is an academic field that draws upon a variety of disciplines such as cultural studies, economics, education, history, political science, psychology, and sociology, to address the central questions of the field:

• What are the causes and conditions which generate and sustain violent conflict?
• What are the mechanisms and models for the resolution of violent conflict?
• What are the norms, practices and institutions for building peace?

An inter-disciplinary faculty group, appointed by Dean Nina Coppens in November 2009, has submitted a preliminary application of Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in Peace and Conflict Studies to the UMass President’s Office. The committee’s goal is to gain full approval by January 2011 and to launch the program, in conjunction with the University of Haifa, in September 2011.
Expert on Ethnic Conflict to Give Lectures at UMass Lowell:
Sammy Smooha will be Second Visiting Professor from University of Haifa

Professor Sammy Smooha of the University of Haifa will give a series of three lectures on “Moving Towards International Peace in the 21st Century” this fall at UMass Lowell. Topics will include:

• How Different Types of Democracy Cope with Ethnonational Conflicts
• Key Issues Dividing Palestinians and Jews in Israel
• The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Possibilities for Transformation

He will be the second professor from the University of Haifa to come to UMass Lowell since Chancellor Meehan signed the Institutional Collaboration Agreement in the Fall of 2009. Professor Gavriel Salomon of University of Haifa was the 2010 Greeley Scholar for Peace Studies.

Professor Sammy Smooha is Professor of Sociology at the University of Haifa (since 1974) and a Visiting Professor in the Sociology Department and the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis University (2010-11). He was a Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, DC (2009-10), Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences (2006-09), President of Israeli Sociological Society (2008-10), and a laureate of Israel Prize for Sociology (2008). He organized the University of Haifa’s new Masters Program in Peace and Conflict Management Studies, which will be launched in fall 2011. He is an expert in comparative ethnic relations, management of ethnic conflicts, Israeli society and Arab-Jewish relations in Israel. His books include Israel: Pluralism and Conflict and Arabs and Jews in Israel.

New Partnership with University of Petra, Jordan

Dr. Adnan Badran, President of the University of Petra, and Chancellor Marty Meehan signed a Memorandum of Understanding in September. The areas of cooperation will include electrical and computer engineering. Dr. Badran is a former Prime Minister of Jordan and also a Senator and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Center of the human rights.

From the Nile to the Merrimack— A Selection of Contemporary Art from Egypt

February 28–March 25, 2011
Curator Talk and Reception: March 1, 3–5pm
71 Wilder Street, Lowell MA 01854

For more information, contact Stephen_Mishol@uml.edu"

“The Egypt trip was evidence of UMass Lowell’s commitment to the Arts and Humanities role in shaping not only the lives of our students but also the world they will continue to define upon graduating. Meeting artists and educators who shared my belief in the vital role the arts have in our lives helped give me a much more expansive context to my work here in Lowell. This exchange of ideas and founding of new friendships was as invaluable as the opportunity to experience Egypt’s rich and complex history.”

— Professor Steve Mishol, Painting

“A Very Private Conversation” (Photo still from a mobile audio installation) by Mohamed Allam.
Note from the Director:

At the Kroc Institute for Peace Studies Summer Institute, I had the opportunity to learn from leading scholars in the field of peace and development. The lecture that most struck me was given by John Paul Lederach, a pioneer in the work of conflict transformation. He spoke about how had been offered an opportunity to do conciliation work in Nepal. Earlier in his career as a peacemaker, he would have immediately taken the position. Experience taught him that sustainable peace and development cannot be achieved quickly. John Paul informed the NGO that offered him the job that he would only accept if they committed to funding him for ten years. Thankful, the NGO accepted and his work in Nepal is in its eight year and enjoying tremendous success.

To make any substantial difference on issues of peace and development in the Middle East, we need to think in the long-term. In this issue you will see exciting new partnerships we have developed, including a collaboration on equity and excellence in education with universities in Belfast and Haifa, partnerships with universities in Jordan and Turkey, a cultural exchange with museums and schools in Egypt, and partnerships with leading social change NGOs in Israel. I will work to ensure that these partnerships are lasting and meaningful so that they fulfill the University’s Strategic Vision of building global connections.

I also want to express appreciation for all the support the Middle East Center has received from the faculty, administration, and students at UMass Lowell. As we move forward, we welcome participation, conversation and suggestions from everyone in our community.

— Dr. Paula Rayman

Shared Vision Conference Leads to Partnerships

Seth Izen, Project Manager for the Middle East Center, represented UMass Lowell at the Shared Vision Conference in Haifa, Israel. The conference was run by Shatil, a leading social change NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) in Israel in partnership with the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at the Technion and ALDA, the Association of Local Democracy Agencies.

The conference brought together academics, activists, and community leaders to examine the ramifications of Haifa as a city shared by different and varied populations. A key goal was to advance the view of the diversity as an asset, not a threat. Haifa is one of the most diverse cities in Israel with Arabs comprising over 10% of the population. “At UMass Lowell, we want to train students for global citizenship,” says Mr. Izen. “The conference was a great opportunity to partner with organizations and research institutions with similar visions. We want to provide a hands-on experience through internships and practicums for our students to learn about the region, become involved in local NGO work, and to apply their education to a real-world situation.” Mr. Izen spoke about the UMass Lowell Middle East Center’s vision as part of the education panel along with Dr. Aura Mor-Zomerfeld, University of Haifa, and Dr. Amal Jabarin, The Committee for Arab Education in Haifa.

Other international guests included Nick Pelham, former Senior Researcher for the International Crisis Group, Professor John Johnston of Goldsmith University of London, and Marco Boaria, ALDA-Europe.

The Middle East Center established important connections with several organizations, including the Council of Volunteer Organizations in Haifa, the Coalition of Women in Haifa, and the Association for Mixed Families Rights.

Upcoming Events

The Middle East Center will be hosting dignitaries during the 2010-2011 academic year, including:

Dr. Majid Al-Haj, is the Vice President and Dean of Research at University of Haifa. He is Director of the Center for Multicultural and Education Research. In 2004, Al-Haj became the first Arab dean at an Israeli university. He was also the first Arab member of Israel’s Council of Higher Education, on which he served from 1995-2001.

Dr. Salwa Bayoumi El-Magoli, is Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Vice-Dean of Environmental Affairs & Community Development at Cairo University. She is the Head of the National Committee for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAAP), and a Member of Al-Shura Council, the Upper House of Egypt’s Parliament.