Shenkar College and UMass Lowell Establish International Graduate Engineering Program

Shenkar College of Engineering and Design of Israel and UMass Lowell signed a historic agreement establishing an international graduate engineering program at a special event in New York City on Oct. 20.

The new international graduate program will be in plastics engineering with a course of study that includes the emerging fields of nanotechnology and the use of polymers for environmental, medical and industrial purposes. Courses offered by both Shenkar College and UMass Lowell will be recognized by each institution toward the completion of the graduate degree. The international agreement also provides for an annual exchange of students and faculty between the schools over the next 10 years, after which the agreement may be renewed.

Participating in the signing of this significant new agreement were UMass Lowell Chancellor Marty Meehan and Prof. Yuli Tamir, president of Shenkar College of Engineering and Design.

“The study of plastics engineering is one of the most important disciplines that shapes our lives, from nanotechnology to biomedical research to environmental issues. This historic agreement gives us the opportunity to learn from each other and benefit from the strengths of each school,” said Tamir.

“When we look at the educational essence of Shenkar College and UMass Lowell, we see an amazing convergence of interests and emphasis, from plastics and textiles to nanotechnology, medical materials and more,” said Meehan. “Plastics engineering is a signature program at UMass Lowell, where we are making great progress in the areas of ‘green’ plastics and the applications of new technologies to medical devices. This international agreement will support research by our faculty and enhance the education of our students.”

At the signing event, held at the Harmonie Club in New York, Shenkar College conferred an honorary fellowship to Meehan and presented the Frontiers in Science Award to David Pernick, UMass Lowell Class of 1941 and life chancellor of Shenkar College, for his role in spearheading the new agreement. Pernick has made significant contributions to forwarding education in plastics engineering at both institutions.

Founded in 1970, Shenkar College is based in Ramat Gan, Israel, a thriving city outside Tel Aviv. More than 2,300 students attend the college, majoring in fields including design (industrial, textile, fashion and jewelry), engineering (chemical, electronics, software and plastics), as well as visual communication and interior building and environment.

Among the other participants in the signing were Danna Azrieli, chairman of the Board of Governors of Shenkar College; Bruce Pernick, Board of Governors member and president of the American Committee for Shenkar College in Israel; UMass Lowell Executive Vice Chancellor Jacqueline Moloney, UMass Lowell Provost Ahmed Abdelal, Prof. Stephen McCarthy of UMass Lowell’s Plastics Engineering Department and Co-Director of the Massachusetts Medical Device Development Center (M2D2); Prof. Paula Rayman, Director of the Middle East Center; Prof. Robert Molloy, chairman of UMass Lowell’s Plastics Engineering Department; Prof. Shmuel Kenig, Dean of Engineering at Shenkar College; and other representatives of both institutions.
From the Nile to the Merrimack: A Selection of Contemporary Art from Egypt

The original art exhibition included digital prints and video work by artists from the Cairo-region of Egypt. Curated and organized by University of Massachusetts Lowell professors Stephen Mishol and Jim Jeffers, and Rasha Ragab, curator at the Museum of Modern Art in Cairo, this exhibition provided curators, university scholars and art students an opportunity to understand artwork in an expanded and global context. The exhibition was the result of an international partnership initiated during a trip to Egypt coordinated and led by Provost Abdelal in the spring of 2010.

The exhibition coincided with the nonviolent revolution that swept Egypt. “With the benefit of hindsight, it’s easy to see the work in the show as ‘something brewing,’” says Prof. Mishol. Several pieces depicting the revolution were included in the exhibit, including video of the protests.

The partnership between UMass Lowell and institutions in Egypt is significant because it creates a multicultural framework. Dr. Mostafa Kamal, Founder and President of the Higher Institute of Applied Arts in Cairo described his vision of the exhibition as: “Art is the channel for common values, understanding, and coexistence with the aim of goodness, development and peace. Our institution had the privilege of hosting Provost Ahmed Abdelal, Professor Stephen Mishol, Professor Stephen McCarthy, Professor Paula Rayman, and Professor Deina Abdelkader from UMass Lowell in 2010. At this meeting we established an important foundation for fruitful cooperation and more understanding between cultures through the medium of visual arts.”

The Nile to the Merrimack exhibition was on display in February and March at the University Gallery.

Israel Prize Laureate Gives Lectures on Ethnic Democracies

Professor Sammy Smooha of the University of Haifa gave two lectures during 2010-11 on how different types of democracies cope with ethnological conflicts. He spoke to faculty and students as part of the Middle East Center’s lecture series on “Moving Towards International Peace in the 21st Century.”

Based on research he undertook as the Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., Smooha spoke about how democracies that are grounded in individual rights encourage assimilation, while those that recognize the collective rights of national communities preserve ethnic differences. Each faces unique challenges. For example, ethnic groups may resist assimilation, even though encouraged. Ethnically and culturally diverse democracies have to deal with issues of power-sharing.

He was 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.
Peace Scholar Discusses The Power of Nonviolence

David Cortright, Director of Policy Studies at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, spoke to a large gathering of students and faculty in November, to discuss the newest research findings on the practice of nonviolence.

Professor Cortright is an internationally renowned scholar and practitioner of nonviolent activism. As an active duty soldier during the Vietnam War, he spoke against that conflict. In 1978, Cortright was named executive director of SANE, the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, which under his leadership grew from 4,000 to 150,000 members and became the largest disarmament organization in the United States. He also was actively involved in the nuclear freeze movement of the 1980s. He is currently Chair of the Board of the Fourth Freedom Forum in Goshen, Indiana.

“New research shows that nonviolence is twice as effective as force in achieving social or political goals,” said Cortright, referring to struggles in Serbia, Ukraine and Nepal, as well as his own experiences. Nonviolence works by creating “loyalty shifts” — changes in attitude within the majority population, both toward entrenched power and nonviolent activist groups. “Governments can justify the use of force against groups that also use force,” said Cortright. “It is much more difficult to justify the use of violence against completely nonviolent protesters.”

Reducing or ending terrorism also is more successful using nonviolent methods, such as a combination of policing and political processes. According to research analysis, military force has a poor record, less than 10 percent success, in eliminating terrorism.

Middle East Center: Interdisciplinary Roots with International Outreach

The Middle East Center was on the cutting edge of educating about nonviolent social change when it invited a leading scholar to speak to students and faculty on the topic in November. Professor David Cortright, Director of Policy Studies at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame gave a talk on the latest research findings on the effectiveness of nonviolence.

• Provost Ahmed Abdelal
• Prof. Deina Abdelkader, Political Science
• Prof. Alkim Akyurtlu, Electrical and Computer Engineering
• Prof. Craig Armiendo, Electrical and Computer Engineering
• Prof. Susan Braunhut, Biological Sciences
• Dean Kathy Carter, College of Management
• Prof. Nathan Gartner, Civil and Environmental Engineering
• Prof. Jehanne-Marie Gavarini, Art
• Dean Anita Greenwood, Graduate School of Education
• Prof. Ainat Koren, Nursing
• Prof. Mufed Mahd, Electrical and Computer Engineering
• Prof. Martin Margala, Electrical and Computer Engineering

UMass Lowell Launches Joint Programs with Turkish Universities

Partnerships with universities in Turkey have led to innovative faculty exchanges. Professor Tello of the College of Management taught a two-week course at Bilkent University in January to 10 undergraduate students. He focused on “Technology and Global Business Strategy.” Dean Kathy Carter, College of Management, has actively supported and initiated these partnerships.

The Electrical and Computer Engineering Department created a summer course for students from UMass Lowell and Yeditepe University. The first month of the program takes place in Turkey where students learn “Programmable Architectures for Next Generation Network Systems” from Professor Yan Lou and Professor Martin Margala. The second month of the course is held in Lowell and Professor Martin Margala will teach “Reconfigurable Architectures.”

These partnerships help fulfill the Chancellor’s strategic vision of preparing students for global citizenship.

Provost Abdelal (Bottom, 3rd from right) and Paula Rayman, Director, (Bottom, Center) host a gathering of faculty working on Middle East partnerships.

• Prof. Stephen McCarthy, Plastics Engineering
• Prof. Steve Mishol, Painting
• Prof. Jim Nehring, Graduate School of Education
• Prof. Ziyad Salameh, Electrical and Computer Engineering
• Prof. Stacy Szczesiul, Graduate School of Education
• Dean Robert Tamarin, College of Sciences
International Women Leaders’ Summit on Security through Economic and Social Development

A delegation of outstanding women leaders from Egypt and Israel joined others from Colombia, Liberia, Northern Ireland and South Africa to meet and learn from each other, forging friendships and building understanding about what it takes to advance democracy and peace.

The delegates from around the world spent three days together at UMass Lowell, presenting on their experiences in their home nations and crafting the Lowell Declaration, a pledge to work jointly and with others on a global network with the common goal of creating non-violent solutions to conflict.

The International Women Leaders’ Summit on Security through Economic and Social Development—held April 10 through April 12 at the UMass Lowell Inn & Conference Center—grew out of an idea formed by the 2010 Greeley Scholar for Peace Prof. Gavriel Salomon, University of Haifa, and UMass Senior Vice President Marcellette Williams. The event was presented by a committee of UMass Lowell faculty, students and staff led by Prof. Paula Rayman and with the support of Provost Ahmed Abdelal.

“One of the goals of UMass Lowell is to become an international institution with a global vision, a diverse faculty and student body, and academic partnerships with universities around the world. An integral part of that goal is to host events like the International Women Leaders’ Summit,” said Abdelal. “Hearing how distinguished women provided leadership in advancing their countries in economic and societal development is critical to this effort and enriches our awareness of both the solemnity of human life and the fragility of the human condition—necessary elements in fostering a global perspective in our students.”

Among the highlights of the summit was the presentation of an honorary degree to Barbara Hogan for her courage and steadfastness in helping to upend South Africa’s apartheid rule. Hogan, said UMass Lowell Chancellor Marty Meehan, “always stood up for what is right, even when she knew she would pay severe consequences.”

The ceremony included a performance of the South African National Anthem by The Mystic Chorale of Arlington and a video tribute to Hogan narrated by Academy Award winner Morgan Freeman. Speakers included Williams and UMass Board of Trustees Chairman James Karam, and UMass President Jack Wilson officiated at the event, which drew more than 150 people.

On the final day of the summit, the delegates signed the Lowell Declaration, which reads: “We join together as colleagues to acknowledge the importance of advancing security through economic and social development. Through collaborative efforts, new international partnerships will be born. While we enjoy our success together at the International Women Leaders’ Summit, we look forward to the larger successes of creating change in our own spheres. We resolve to carry on our new understandings into our organizations, our communities, our nations and our global society.”

Plans call for the launch of a global network of women leaders to establish international bridges to promote peace through supporting economic and social development, and foster partnerships with women leaders in Massachusetts. Rayman, the event’s chairwoman, said the lessons of the summit include, “Knowledge without compassion is worthless and knowledge with compassion is wisdom.”
Participants in the summit from the Middle East included:

• Salwa Bayoumi El-Magoli of Egypt, a member of the Al-Shura Council, the upper house of Egypt’s Parliament, head of the National Committee for Quality Assurance and Accreditation and a dean at Cairo University;

• Mona Makram-Ebeid of Egypt, founding member of the Arab Organization for Human Rights and the Egyptian Council for Foreign Relations, and a former member of parliament in the People’s Assembly of Egypt.

• Gila Svirsky of Israel, founding member of the Coalition of Women for Peace, a group of eight Israeli and Palestinian organizations.

• Rula Deeb of Israel, director of Kayan, which works to advance the status of women in Israeli-Palestinian society.

Social Media Plays a Role

Deina Abdelkader, assistant professor of political science, is also optimistic. Originally from Egypt, she specializes in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Islamic activism and democratization in the Muslim world.

Abdelkader discussed the recent history of young Egyptians using social media, especially the case of Khaled Saeed. Saeed’s death by a police beating last summer caused an uproar. The subsequent Facebook page, “We Are All Khaled Saeed,” became a center for planning the revolt.

“The young people were afraid for themselves because they saw it happen to one of their own,” says Abdelkader, who also showed a BBC-produced map of Tahrir Square under occupation. The demonstrators were well organized, with places for artists, trash, medicine and health needs, blogging and more.

Egypt’s Future: Reflections and Dialogue

As demonstrations and uprisings continue to sweep across North Africa and the Middle East, UMass Lowell experts on Egypt and the region gathered to reflect on recent events, offer background and perspective, and discuss the transition to a more open system of governance.

The panel, Egypt’s Future: Reflections and Dialogue, was sponsored by UMass Lowell’s Center for Middle East Peace, Development and Culture. Prof. Paula Rayman, the Center’s director, moderated the discussion.

The revolution of Jan. 25 has entered the history books. That date marks the beginning of the occupation of Tahrir Square in Cairo, an 18-day siege that culminated with the resignation of Egypt’s longtime president, Hosni Mubarak.

UMass Lowell Provost Ahmed Abdelal grew up in Egypt and has six siblings living in Cairo, including a brother who is a law professor.

“They are excited about the uprising,” said Abdelal. “This was led by the educated class and the young people. And except for the violence that erupted when they were attacked, this was a largely peaceful revolution.”

Abdelal added that Mubarak did a lot of good things in his first 10 years: “Unfortunately, he stayed for 30.”

Military Future in Question

Panelist Gregory Aftandilian, now an associate of the Center, is a former Middle East analyst for the U.S. State Department and Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff member who served as a foreign policy fellow to the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.

Aftandilian focused his remarks on the military and what may happen while it’s in control, noting that the military is a huge organization within Egyptian society and accustomed to having lots of autonomy.

“I think the military will be fine with civilian leadership as long as it retains its autonomy,” he says. “Eventually, the new civilian leadership will have to strike a deal about separating the political and military spheres.”

Meanwhile, changes are needed: removal of the state of emergency law, reconfiguration of the National Democratic Party so that it’s divorced from state rule, and replacement of government leaders. The military council has already taken steps to rein in the Mukhabarat, the Egyptian secret police force, and to begin a process for amending the constitution.

“I am optimistic that the military will allow these changes, as long as they believe that they will be left alone and retain autonomy,” says Aftandilian.
Note from the Director:

This is a momentous time in the Middle East region. People from many nations in the Middle East are raising their voices against authoritarian regimes and years of corruption. They seek responsible governance and great democracy. Of particular note are the diversity of the participants calling for change—women and men, young and old, secular and religious and the nonviolent methods employed in the protests including creative use of technological communications, mass nonviolent marches and social and economic boycotts all aimed at political reform.

During this major time of transformation, the Middle East Center has sponsored a number of key events to help the UMass community and the larger public gain a greater understanding of the changes in reality on the ground. We have had a thoughtful panel presentation (see page 5). We supported a cultural exchange of art work (see page 2) Most recently, the International Women Leaders Summit included women from Egypt who spoke eloquently about the importance of human rights and women leaders from 6 other nations joined them in stressing significance of nonviolent struggles for social and economic development leading to peace.

We wish to thank our Chancellor and Provost and others in the UMass Lowell community for their support for all of these events and most of all applaud the women leaders and people in the Middle East who are working hard to make a more harmonious global society.

— Dr. Paula Rayman

Faculty Profile

Deina Abdelkader, Political Science

Professor Abdelkader is an assistant professor of Political Science. She is actively involved in the Middle East Center. She is also a member of the Peace and Conflict Studies Faculty Committee and will attend the Kroc Institute for Peace Studies Faculty Workshop at Notre Dame.

Why did you decide to become a professor?

It is second nature in my family: my maternal grandfather was a professor and my father is a professor. I also personally enjoy teaching and learning from my students. I am proud to say that some of my students moved on to be public servants who work on improving relations between Middle Eastern countries and the US, and others are following in the same path of academia and are about to get their PhDs. I enjoy seeing that spark of interest and the energy that the students get that drives them to seek those career paths.

What are your academic interests?

My academic interests are: The democratization of the Middle East (therefore I am very intent on observing Comparative democratization as field grow in the American Political Science Association); Islamic law with a focus on Rulership, Justice, and the Role of Women; Conflict Management and Development are also more generally of interest to me because of my involvement with the Center for International Development and Conflict Management led by the late Edward Azar and later by Ted Robert Gurr.

What book are you currently writing?

I am eagerly waiting for the publication of my new book in March(UK)/May(U.S.A) titled: “Islamic Activists: The Anti-Enlightenment Democrats”, I am also working on two entries for the Oxford Encyclopedia for Islam and an article on the relationship between Islamic and Western Political Thought.

Why are Middle East Partnerships important?

I think partnerships with Middle Eastern Universities are extremely important because aside from building our knowledge as a nation about the region, they create cultural bridges between those institutions and UMass-Lowell. In an age where the internet and news sound-bites could lead to misperceptions and confusion, this human exchange in highly valuable.

Middle East Center Names First Associate

Gregory Aftandilian, an independent consultant and university lecturer on Middle East politics, was named the first associate of the Middle East Center at UMass Lowell. He worked for 21 years for the U.S. Government in such capacities as Middle East analyst at the State Department, professional staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and foreign policy fellow to Senator Edward Kennedy. He received the State Department’s Superior Honor Award for his analytical work on Egypt, and is the author of Egypt’s Bid for Arab Leadership: Implications for U.S. Policy and “Looking Forward: An Integrated Strategy for Supporting Democracy and Human Rights in Egypt.”

On campus, Greg has given guest lectures, participated in panel discussions, mentored students, and arranged practicums and internships.

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