On Campus

UMass Lowell Named as Hub for Women in Public Service Project

Inaugural Conference Hosts Women from Middle East and around the World

UMass Lowell welcomed emerging women leaders from Afghanistan, Turkey, Northern Ireland and Liberia for a conference on Conflict Transformation through Economic Development and Innovation. The conference, organized in partnership with the other UMass campuses and Arizona State University, San Francisco State University and University of Maryland Baltimore County, served as the launch of the public sector involvement in the Women in Public Service Project (WPSP). The conference was made possible by support from Senior Vice President Marcellette Williams, Chancellor Marty Meehan, Executive Vice Chancellor Jacquie Moloney and Provost Ahmed Abdelal. Support was also received from the Provosts’ offices at the other UMass campuses. The leadership team for the conference included Dr. Paula Rayman, Victoria Denoon and Seth Izen.

WPSP was founded by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and is now housed at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, headed by the Honorable Jane Harman. The initiative seeks to advance women to positions of influence in governments and civic organizations worldwide. It provides vital momentum to the next generation of women leaders who will invest in their countries and communities, provide leadership for their governments and societies, and help change the way global solutions are developed. The Women in Public Service Project envisions a world in which political and civic leadership is at least 50 percent female by 2050 (50 by 50.).

UMass Lowell is currently serving as the hub for public university involvement in the Women in Public Service Project. At the conference, participants engaged in learning sessions and discussions on:

- The Gendered Political Economy of Building Peace in Conflict-Affected States
- The Role of Women and Healthcare in Country Development
- Sharing STEM: Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Community Engagement
- The Material Basis of Violence Against Women and Engaging Males in Promoting Change
- Working Towards Positive Peace

The women heard from several public sector leaders. Congresswoman Niki Tsongas spoke about engaging women in political leadership and public service. Chancellor Marty Meehan spoke about the importance of women in leadership positions and awarded Farah Pandith, the State Department’s Special Representative to Muslim Communities, with UMass Lowell’s inaugural Public Service Award. At the end of the conference, the delegates met with Rangita de Silva de Alwis, Director of the Women in Public Service Project to discuss next steps for involvement in the initiative.

Congresswoman Niki Tsongas spoke to the delegates on the importance of women’s involvement in public service.
Center Receives Grant to Host Egyptian Ambassador

**United States Institute of Peace Sponsoring Event**

The Middle East Center received a grant from the United States Institute of Peace to host Egyptian Ambassador Mohamed Tawfik for a presentation on Vital Visions: A Future of Peace in the Middle East. The Ambassador’s talk will explore his vision for human rights, democracy, and inclusion of women in Egypt and the Middle East by the year 2050. Successful long term peace relies not only on the absence of violence but also on the presence of the conditions necessary for sustainable peace such as human rights, equality, economic development and democracy. This event will advance the understanding of international conflict resolution and peace-building by focusing on attempts to build positive peace in Egypt and the region. Ambassador Tawfik has served various postings in Egypt’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which he joined in 1983. He became ambassador to the United States in 2012, having previously served as ambassador to Lebanon, Australia, and several other countries. This is the third grant from United States Institute of Peace received by UMass Lowell. An invitation has been formally extended to Ambassador Tawfik and it is hoped the Ambassador will speak on campus in the spring.

![Ambassador Mohamed Tawfik](image)

Center Sponsors Teach-In on Syrian Crisis

In September, when the United States Congress was deliberating about airstrikes on Syria, the Center sponsored an interdisciplinary Teach-In to answer the question: “Where do we go from here?” The event brought together faculty from the Political Science department, Center for Terrorism and Security Studies, and the Middle East Center to give their perspectives on what was next for Syria. Professor Deina Abdelkader from the Political Science Department spoke about how the history of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria would affect the conflict and the potential regime change. Neil Shortland, Senior Research Associate at the Center for Terrorism and Security Studies, spoke about the implications of Syria for the future of terrorism and national security. He cautioned that the conflict was becoming a safe haven for jihadists and could increase the number of domestic terrorists once the jihadists returned to their home countries. The final speaker was Greg Aftandilian, an Associate with the Middle East Center, who explained the US foreign policy towards Syria. He argued that President Obama painted himself into a corner when he declared a red line on chemical weapons. Ultimately, Mr. Aftandilian predicted that Syria would cooperate with the weapons inspectors in order to give the current government legitimacy.

Research and Partnerships

**Israeli and Palestinian Women Launch Art and Photo Exhibition**

200 Palestinians from the West Bank and around 1,500 Israelis came to a unique art event that was held in the heart of Tel Aviv under the slogan “Let’s Start from Talking.” The women’s group of Parents and Children’s Family Circle—bereaved Israeli and Palestinian mothers, sisters, wife and daughters – presented the fruits of their year-long project funded by USAID, including a photography exhibition, art exhibition, dialogue encounters, and selling of homemade foods and hand works. Hundreds of Israelis and Palestinians came to take part, meet the other side and call for a change in the current situation and reaching a solution to the endless conflict. Professor Paula Rayman, Director of the Middle East Center, is a part of the second round of the grant and will lead workshops for the women on active nonviolence.

Provost Gives “Work-Integrated Learning” Presentation at King Fahd University

Provost Ahmed Abdelal presented a talk on “Work-integrated learning at UMass Lowell” at King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia on Tuesday October 1, 2013. He also met the Vice Rector for Academic affairs, academic deans and cooperative program coordinators for further discussions on the subject and related academic issues. KFUPM is one of the leading higher education institutions in the Middle East. KFUPM offers undergraduate and graduate programs in Engineering, Computer Science & Engineering, Industrial Management, Sciences and Environmental Design. All the Engineering Programs are ABET accredited and Industrial Management Programs are AACSB accredited.
**Trip to Turkey Focuses on Religious Coexistence**

As part of an interreligious group led by the Peace Islands Institute, Professor Paula Rayman, Professor Deina Abdelkader, and Reverend Imogene Stulken visited academic, religious and cultural sites in Turkey. The delegation’s visit was designed to further research around religious coexistence and inspired Professor Abdelkader to develop the summer course, “The Roots of the Modern Middle East: The Capital of the Ottoman Empire.” For Professor Abdelkader, visiting other academic institutions and meeting with journalists shed light on the contemporary tension between secularist Kemalists and the ruling Justice and Development Party under the leadership of President Erdogan.

For Professor Paula Rayman, Director of the Middle East Center, the trip to Turkey opened new doors of understanding regarding peace, development and culture. In terms of peace, the visit occurred just days after mass nonviolent demonstrations against the government’s decision to close a park valued by the local populace and done without full democratic participation. While Turkey economically is striving to become increasingly integrated with the EU it is wrestling with realities of ethnic/religious tensions and growing inequity between urban and rural areas. Turkey also has a rich history of opening its borders to minority groups, including the Sultan’s rescue of Jews fleeing the inquisition in the late 1400’s. In fact the Treaty of Kadesh, signed between the empires of the Hittites and Egyptians in 13 century BC is the oldest recorded peace treaty known to humankind. The content of the Treaty remains relevant for today’s political conflicts.

The trip invited reflection on many questions for Reverend Stulken such as:

- What is the relationship between a secular and a religious state? How does a nation allow for—and not restrict—the free practice of religion (for example, the wearing of certain religiously identifying clothing or symbols) while still maintaining the secular character of the state? How does a nation allow for the free practice of many religions within the context of a dominant religion?

It is the hope of the Middle East Center to deepen our partnerships in the region and increase university wide exchanges.

**Delegation Travels to United Arab Emirates**

**Signs Cooperation Agreements with University of Sharjah**

A UMass Lowell delegation led by Provost Ahmed Abdelal traveled to the United Arab Emirates to set up cooperation agreement. Members of the delegation included Dean Luis Falcon, Associate Dean Julie Nash, and Professor Wael Kamal. On the trip, UMass Lowell signed a cooperation agreement with University of Sharjah to focus on media, criminology, and security. The two universities also agreed to collaborate in executive training in a number of areas, including public policy and politics. In addition, the delegation visited Dubai and Abu Dhabi Media Cities in order to set up international co-ops that will be attractive to UMass Lowell students.

For next steps, the School of Criminology and Justice Studies will explore collaborations in areas of policing and corrections with University of Sharjah. Also, UMass at Kuwait (supported by Raytheon) and the collaborative work in UAE will serve to connect UMass with key countries in the Gulf region.
Courses

Note from the Director:
We are pleased that during 2013 the Middle East Center was able to accomplish a wide range of special events, new courses, international partnerships, and host a global conference for emerging women leaders. The coming months will feature an interdisciplinary course on human rights led by Greeley Scholar Albie Sachs and trips to the Middle East to deepen university partnerships.

—Professor Paula Rayman

Bridging Minds for Peace: Interfaith Perspectives and The Universal Moral System

Professor Wagdi Zeid developed an innovative new course focused on exploring how a universal moral system could help resolve conflicts in the Middle East. Through examining four major interfaith studies, the course helped students identify and explore a set of morals in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, examine how far this set of morals could be universally accepted by all, even the nonreligious and shed light on the possibilities and challenges to bridging the religious divide through a universal, interfaith moral code. The course was offered as a combined honors undergraduate and graduate section. A manuscript of the students papers is currently being compiled by Professor Zeid.

New Course to Promote Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution through Media

Professor Wael Kamal, Journalism & Media Studies and Art, is developing a course that uses media (in the form of video) to promote cross-cultural communication for peace. This course is guided by the idea that promoting a “one-size-fits-all” democratic model has been misguided, and ultimately counterproductive. In the course, students will create short videos without dialogue (just music) and share them with students from a different culture, as an example with a partner University in the United Arab Emirates and vice-versa. Through this process, the students will explore creating a common ground of understanding between different cultures with the aim of coexistence. Students are going to read and learn about negotiating change via communication instead of forcing change via power. The class will focus on the concept of accepting the other with the aim of coexistence and peace.

Middle East Center in the News

The University of Massachusetts Lowell Middle East Center along with Center Associate Gregory Aftandilian have been mentioned in the following media outlets:
- WBZ radio in Boston
- Boston Herald
- Voice of America
- Parameters Journal (U.S. Army War College)
- World Politics Review Journal
- Chelmsford TV station

Human Rights Course to Explore Issues Related to Egypt, Israel

Perspectives on Human Rights, an interdisciplinary course built around the visit of 2014 Greeley Scholar Albie Sachs, will focus on issues of human rights around the world, including a special focus on the Middle East. The Honorable Albie Sachs is a former constitutional court justice in South Africa who was appointed to the bench by Nelson Mandela. During his tenure on the court, Albie Sachs was involved in several landmark human rights rulings. During his residence at UMass Lowell in April, Justice Sachs will teach the classes. During the rest of the semester, interdisciplinary faculty will teach the course. Professor Paula Rayman, Director of the Middle East Center and Peace and Conflict Studies, will act as coordinator for this special interdisciplinary seminar. Professor Shana Minkin will provide her expertise as a historian to discuss discourses about human rights in Egypt. Professor Wael Kamal will explore the relationship between communication, media and human rights. Other faculty will offer insights into a range of areas such as the connection between law, religion, education and human rights. The course is offered to undergraduate honors students as well as graduate students.

2014 Greeley Scholar Albie Sachs