Professor Rayman named Distinguished American Speaker: Presents at United States Embassy in Israel

Professor Paula Rayman, Director of the Middle East Center, was selected to speak as part of the Distinguished American Speaker program at the United States Embassy in Israel. She was hosted by Chargé d’Affaires Thomas Goldberger and his wife, Eden. In her presentation, “An American Scholar Looks ‘Beyond Coexistence’ in Israel,” Prof. Rayman spoke about how nonviolent action has been instrumental in advancing the quest for democracy and better social and economic conditions in the US and the region, and examined how nonviolent interactions within Israeli society between Arab and Jewish populations may bring about constructive change.

Following her remarks, the audience of 35 professors, NGO leaders and community activists engaged in a lively discussion. Prof. Rayman was in Israel on a Senior Fulbright Specialist Award, and was working with the University of Haifa on the study “Beyond Coexistence: Israeli Arab and Jewish Relations.” Prof. Rayman also spoke to Jewish and Arab women leaders on the issue of “Can You Work and Have a Life?”

Middle East Center Receives State Department Grant

The United States Consulate in Jerusalem awarded Prof. Rayman and a coalition of women’s organizations in Israel with a grant to bring together Palestinian and Israeli women leaders to build trust and leadership capacity for nonviolent social change. The idea for the “Women’s Leadership for Nonviolent Action for Change” project was initiated when Prof. Rayman was a Senior Fulbright Fellow with Haifa University in Israel. As director of the UMass Lowell Middle East Center for Middle East Peace, Development and Culture, she has many connections with peace and conflict resolution scholars in the region.

The changing atmosphere in the Middle East energized discussions among peace scholars and activists within Israel and Palestine. “Women will play a critical role in social change,” says Rayman. “UMass Lowell can facilitate other institutions in building multi-dimensional partnerships.”

Three organizations are partners in the proposal:

- Kayan, which focuses on Arab women in Israel;
- Shatil, which focuses on Arab-Jewish social change leadership in Israel; and
- The Parents Circle, which links Palestinians and Israelis who have lost a family member in the conflict.

Prof. Rayman will return to Israel in Spring 2012 to train women peace leaders and help the organizations launch the initiative.
UMass Lowell Begins Partnerships with Palestinian Universities

During her term as Senior Fulbright Fellow at University of Haifa, Prof. Rayman visited two Palestinian universities in the West Bank: An-Najah University and Birzeit University. UMass Lowell is currently exploring partnerships with the universities in the following areas:

**An-Najah National University**
- Education Curriculum
- Peace and Nonviolence Studies
- Women’s Studies

**Birzeit University**
- Issues of State Formation
- Non Violence as Social Change

Faculty from UMass Lowell, University of Haifa, and St. Mary’s University College Belfast developed a proposed international study on “How May Schools Serving Marginalized Populations Respond Simultaneously to Policy Demands for Test Performance and 21st Century Learning?”

In 2009, partnership agreements were signed between the University of Massachusetts Lowell, the University of Haifa in Israel, and St. Mary’s University College in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Faculty at all three institutions were encouraged to collaborate. Faculty in the respective colleges of education held informal conversations and observed that their respective nations (the United States, Ireland, and Israel) were among those nations where the learning gap between marginalized youth and middle class youth were widest.

The study seeks to identify and learn from schools in the three nations serving predominantly marginalized populations that have figured out how to respond in promising ways to both the demand for test performance and the demand for 21st century learning. After identifying several such schools in each nation, researchers will develop case studies. Cases will be compared across schools and across nations to identify what is universal and what is particular among successful schools and to identify principles and practices from which other schools may learn.

Researchers
- James H. Nehring, University of Massachusetts Lowell
- Stacy Szczesiul, University of Massachusetts Lowell
- Rivka Eisikovits, University of Haifa
- Lily Orland-Barak, University of Haifa
- Merav S. Ben-Nun, University of Haifa
- Martin Hagan, St. Mary’s University College Belfast
- Frank Hennessey, St. Mary’s University College Belfast

There is a significant water problem in Israel and the surrounding region. Agriculture has led to significant diversions of major rivers. Water quality is very poor; 95% of Gaza water is undrinkable by US Standards and there is no central sewage system in the West Bank. Run-off from pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers further lower water quality.

UMass Lowell has begun a partnership with the Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research at Ben-Gurion University, Israel, to address these problems. Areas of collaboration will focus on “value-added” approaches whereby each university will make a meaningful contribution to the partnership. The three areas include: water remediation, climate change and water patterns such as droughts and floods, and public policy surrounding water usage and its effects on populations.

BGU has existing connections with Palestinian and Jordanian Universities in the area of water research, which will allow for the possibility of multilateral collaboration through faculty and student research exchange.
‘Locked in a Violent Embrace’ Explores Escalation of Domestic Violence

Sometimes the people we love best are the ones who hurt us the most. Long the subject of literature, drama and film, partner violence is now the subject of rigorous research.

Social welfare Prof. Zvi Eisikovits, director of the Center for the Study of Society at the University of Haifa, discussed his research on intimate partner violence.

Eisikovits described how couples’ behavioral patterns can lead to the escalation of violence. Within the relationship, he explained, the partners may have differing perceptions of conflict and pain. Also, cultural differences in how to define and respond to verbal and physical abuse can complicate understanding of the escalating violence.

Eisikovits is the fourth faculty member from University of Haifa to engage in a research exchange with UMass Lowell, through the expanding partnership in peace and conflict studies. The presentation was co-sponsored by the Criminal Justice and Criminology Department, the interdisciplinary Peace and Conflict Studies Program and the Middle East Center for Peace, Development and Culture. During his residency on campus, Eisikovits’s wife, Rivka, is working with the UMass Lowell Graduate School of Education on best practices research in school reform.

“We are fortunate to have a scholar of international stature address members of the University community,” says Prof. Eva Buzaw a, chair of the Criminal Justice and Criminology Department. “Researchers could appreciate his rigorous methodology, while students and the general public could learn from his highly interesting findings.”

Paula Rayman, Peace and Conflict Studies Director, noted, “One of the most interesting learnings from the event was the comparative perspective he offered on verbal and physical violence in Israel and the United States.”

“We Are Egypt” Gives First-Hand Account of Uprising

The dream of democracy in Egypt was just that—a dream—in 2010, when filmmaker Lillie Paquette interviewed dozens of Egyptian youth activists, labor leaders and opposition members.

Paquette screened the resulting documentary, “We Are Egypt—Voices Leading to Revolution,” at a Peace and Conflict Studies event, part of a series to launch the new program. After the film, a panel of experts on the Middle East commented and led a discussion.

The uprising across North Africa and the Middle East in the spring of 2011 took everyone by surprise, despite a history of opposition to despotic regimes in the region.

“None of us are prophets, none of us would have predicted this a year ago,” said Prof. Paula Rayman, director of the Middle East Center for Peace, Development and Culture, in opening the panel discussion. “We need to ask, what is the meaning of these courageous actions, these street-level movements toward new forms of freedom and democracy? And, what are the challenges that people face?”

The panel included Rayman; Political Science Asst. Prof. Deina Abdelkader, who has lived in Egypt and is the author of a book about Middle East democracy movements; Greg Aftandilian, former foreign policy adviser to Sen. Edward Kennedy and an associate at the Center for Middle East Peace, Development and Culture; Political Science Assoc. Prof. Vickie Langhor of Holy Cross, where she directs the peace and conflict studies concentration; and Paquette. Paquette is a specialist in international affairs with a master’s degree in Global Studies from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

New headline?

The Peace and Conflict Studies program celebrated the launch of the new Bachelors and Masters degrees. Provost Ahmed Abdelal and Dean Nina Coppens welcomed the class and commended the students for being part of the new program. Paula Rayman, Director of the program, praised the incoming class, “We have truly skilled and experienced students entering the master’s degree program,” says Rayman. “These exemplary individuals will enrich the intellectual life of campus.” The diverse group of students come from near and far and include a Master’s student from Syria and students who are doing their thesis research on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
Note from the Director:

As the Middle East Center enters 2012, I am proud to report on the success and progress we have seen. UMass Lowell now has active international partnerships with universities in Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Turkey and we will be exploring partnerships in Lebanon. We are excited about the innovative student, faculty, and research exchanges in this newsletter.

Our success is based on the extraordinary support we receive from our Provost and Chancellor, the commitment of dedicated faculty at our university and at partner institutions, and our focus on finding value-added areas for partnerships. A main goal of our international partnerships is to enter into collaborations whereby each university contributes their unique intellectual and strategic advantages.

For instance, in a new collaboration with the Zuckenberg Water Research Institute at Ben-Gurion University, we are jointly identifying key areas of need for water research in Israel in which UMass Lowell has expertise. Those areas, including water remediation and impact of climate change on water patterns, will form the basis of our collaboration. UMass Lowell will benefit from having new opportunities for applied international research for students and faculty.

Our Center also has the advantage of being able to bring together universities in the Middle East that might not interact on their own. In the future, we hope to foster collaborations between universities in Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine on essential research areas. Serving as the coordinating institution, UMass Lowell will advance our strategic aims of becoming a leader in preparing our students for global citizenship.

Last year we launched the International Women Leaders’ Summit which included women leaders from Egypt, Israel and Palestine as well as Nobel Prize Laureate Leymah Gbowee. As we go to press we celebrate the heroic women of Egypt for standing up for social justice and equal human rights.

I look forward, with your support, to continuing the mission of the Middle East Center in the coming years.

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**Science and Technology Development**

**From the Bosphorus to the Merrimack Bridging the Gap in Assistive Technology**

**UMass Lowell** faculty organized a National Science Foundation Sponsored US-Turkish Workshop on Assistive Technology in Istanbul, Turkey on June 6-8, 2011 on the campus of Yeditepe University. The conference organizers were UMass Lowell professors Alkim Akyurtlu, Craig Armiento, and Martin Margala of the Electrical and Computer Engineering Dept. and Deirdra Murphy of the Physical Therapy Dept.

Turkey lags behind the United States in assistive technology development, with only one company in Turkey creating devices. The workshop was therefore organized as a peer-to-peer meeting, with an emphasis on activities designed to facilitate tangible outcomes, including:

- Communicating the value of Assistive Technology as an approach to increase women’s participation and service learning in both undergraduate and graduate engineering programs
- Promoting and advancing Assistive Technology as a benefit for US and Turkish societies as well as an educational tool for universities
- Exploring strategies (e.g. U.S./Turkish faculty exchange) to assist US and Turkish universities to establish joint Assistive Technology programs
- Highlighting advanced technologies that can be applied to Assistive Technology as a means of developing graduate level research programs in Assistive Technology
- Establishing the framework for collaborative research and educational efforts between Turkish and US institutions.

The workshop focused on education, research and commercialization. Leading researchers in these three main focus areas came from universities cross the US, including Georgia Tech, University of Wisconsin Madison and University of Colorado and from Europe, as well as from Turkey. Moreover, several industrial partners including Intel and AIAA were present. Several students (including UMass Lowell students Erin Webster, David Harrington, Emma Barnard, and Erin Reusch) also presented posters during the workshop.

Moreover, during this meeting a visit to the Metin Sabanci Spastic Children’s Center was organized. Through this visit, an effort has begun to develop Assistive Technology projects by the undergraduate students in the UML Electrical and Computer Engineering Department’s Capstone Design course. Once complete, these products will be delivered to the Center’s residents.

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From left to right: Stephen McCarthy, Deirdra Murphy, Alkim Akyurtlu, Craig Armiento
Back row:
Left to right: Erin Webster, David Harrington, Emma Barnard, Erin Reusch