

**Exporting US Higher
Education to the Middle
East:**

*American University of Sharjah
as a Case Study*

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Presented to the
Foreign Service Group of Central Texas
Austin, Texas
April 26, 2007

Pre-eminence of American Style Higher Education

- Currently accepted as the pre-eminent model world-wide
- Students want to come to the US for study
- American institutions setting up campuses abroad
- American-style institutions being founded world-wide

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Characteristics of the American Model of Higher Education

- Mass accessibility for learners
- Academic support for learners
- A rich variety of institutional types
- A common general educational component at the bachelor's level
- Importance of co-curricular student activities
- Quality assurance through accreditation

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Higher Education in Middle East

- Long-standing national institutions in countries
- Primary mission: educate nationals
- Follow various educational models
- Two well-known American-model schools
 - American University of Cairo (AUC)
 - American University of Beirut (AUB)

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Tremendous growth in higher education in last decade in the GCC

- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members
 - Kuwait
 - Bahrain
 - United Arab Emirates
 - Saudi Arabia
 - Qatar
 - Oman
- Increase in population
 - 3% annual growth rate
 - 60% under 16
- Decline in sending students abroad
- Increase in female student numbers

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New Institutions

- Overwhelmingly follow the American model
- Most are private institutions
 - Some as money-making ventures
 - Most non-profit
- Many have direct connection to US partner institution

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Parameters Affecting Higher Education

- Competition (in each country and in Middle East)
- Student preparation (variety of high school systems)
- Standardized testing (SAT/ACT) not used
- Accreditation (national, USA, other)
- Parental interest
- Financial ability to pay for education
- Government support
- Faculty availability
- Employer financial support and employment
- Cultural dimensions

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Qatar Foundation

- Invited top American universities to operate branches on campus built in Doha
 - Georgetown offers Foreign Service
 - TAMU offers Engineering
 - Cornell offers Medical school
 - CMU offers Business and Computer Science
 - Virginia Commonwealth offers Fine Arts
- Maintain same standards as US sites
- No cost to US campuses

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United Arab Emirates



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About UAE

- Seven Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah + 4 more
- Age structure: 15-64 years -- 71.2%
74% in this age group are expats
- Government: federation with specified powers delegated to the UAE federal government and other powers reserved for emirates

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Ethnic groups of UAE

- Population is approximately 4,500,000
- Most diverse in Middle East
 - Emirati 20%
 - Other Arabs and Iranian 20%
 - South Asian 50%
 - Western and East Asian 10%

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Economy – GDP growth

- Formed in 1971 from British Trucial States
- 10.8 billion USD in 1975
- 76.5 billion USD in 2003 (up 7+% per year)
- 162.3 billion USD in 2006 (up 25+% per year)

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American University of Sharjah Established in 1997



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AUS Mission and Role

- **The mission of the American University of Sharjah (AUS) is to achieve and maintain preeminence as a coeducational institution based upon American models and grounded in the history and culture of the Arab Gulf region**
- Not-for-profit
- Independent institution
 - On-going assistance from American University
 - Initial assistance for Engineering from TAMU

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AUS Data

- Schools/Colleges
 - Engineering
 - Business and Management
 - Arts and Science
 - Architecture and Design
- Degrees – 25 BS and 8 MS
- Students (approx): 4300 UG; 200 G
- Over 70 nationalities; about 45% female
- Faculty: 275 -- must have terminal degree

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Start-up Challenges

- Infrastructure
 - University City
 - Campus funded and built by Sheikh
- Faculty recruitment
 - Terminal degrees
 - Preference for US/NA experience
- Student recruitment
 - Recruited regionally

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Accreditation

- Most asked question by parents
- UAE accredited
- US accredited
 - University – Middle States Association (2004)
 - Engineering – Full EAC ABET accreditation (2006)

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Ministry of Higher Education and Research

- Mission: To establish high-quality advanced educational system for UAE citizens and expats
- Emphasize UAE educational accomplishments
- Ministries services
 - Guidance and UAE accreditation inspections
 - Verifies degrees and certificates issued in UAE
 - Introduces students to overseas institutions

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Future of higher education in the region

- Seen by many as the hope of the future
- Huge proliferation of institutions in region, especially in Saudi Arabia
- Additional controls on quality of faculty, students and curriculum through accreditation requirements
- Employment opportunities for graduates in GCC countries is tighter as nationals seek jobs

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