

PRESIDENT'S NEWS DIGEST

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the 23rd issue of the 4th year of the President's News Digest. In this issue of the News Digest, I will address the subject of "Professionalism in the Higher Education sector".



Professionalism is defined as a set of beliefs, values and norms that drive our behavior and working practices. This is of a massive importance in the Higher Education sector, as parents and relatives of our students have trusted us to behave professionally and respect the ethics of our profession as educators.

Universities play an important role in the economic and social development of any nation as graduates are trusted to serve the needs of current and future generations.

Professionalism in the Higher Education sector should include the following:

- Feedback to students should be provided in a timely manner.
- Classes should not be cancelled or scheduled except in very exceptional cases.
- Respect for students should be observed and there should be no taking advantage of somebody's position.
- All students should be treated equally irrespective of their learning abilities, social status, etc.
- Staff should make exceptional efforts during office hours to help all students.
- Accountability of staff and students should be clearly defined and followed.
- The curriculum should be fully covered and no shortening of lectures should be allowed.

INTERVIEW OF THE WEEK

We would like to feature the interview this week with:



UNIVERSITY IMPACT RANKINGS

The world's first university impact ranking, published by Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, reveals a new hierarchy of global institutions based on universities' work towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The ranking offers new insights on universities with regards to gender equality, climate action and sustainable cities and communities, among other areas.

ASU is proud to be listed in the range of 301+ in this ranking which is a great achievement added to the other achievements of the university in the recent years.

Congratulations to the University, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, the President, and all colleagues and students. Special thanks go to Dr Mohammed Yousif for leading our work in this area. Dr Mohamed Yousif who was in Korea, where the results were released, will provide us with more information about our position in this prestigious ranking. For more information, please check the rankings at the following link.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/rankings/impact/2019/>



Name: Ebrahim Abbas Habib Ahmad Hasan

Position: Security Supervisor

1. Tell us about yourself: (Your childhood, academic background)

I have been working as a Security Supervisor in the Administrative Affairs Department since 2013. I worked for 28 years in the General Directorate of Traffic. I am a father of one girl and three boys. They are the life to me.

2. Tell us about your job at ASU

Being a Security Supervisor, I manage and oversee the security and other activities of the University including guests, students, employees and drivers.

3. Tell us about your aspirations for the University

I am happy to witness the University going so successful day after day.

4. What do you enjoy most about your job?

The arrangements I do and the duties I have, makes me work closely with students and employees. I like to be around them and to assist them with anything I can.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD COURSE PORTFOLIO? BY PROF KHALED GHARAIBEH

As you may all know, course portfolios have been the center of quality audits by QA/NQF bodies in recent years. The University Senior Management has always emphasized that course portfolios should be given special care by academic staff, college quality units and college deans as these form the heart of quality of teaching and learning.

ASU has setup policies, processes and procedures for ensuring that teaching and learning comply with the national quality requirements as well as with international best practices and benchmarks. In general, course portfolios need to be understood as a tool for continuous improvement as well as compliance with the University standards in teaching and learning. Therefore, academic staff need to be aware that stacking papers in a file is not the objective of course portfolios but rather, the improvement that results from analyzing of the paperwork in the course portfolio.

A recent study by the University on samples of course portfolios has shown that although most academic staff work hard on preparing course portfolios of their courses, it was noticed that the practice needs to be improved and more care should be given to these portfolios.

In general, a good course portfolio would have the following features:

1. Learning Outcomes: A good course portfolio emphasizes the Learning Outcome (LO) approach in teaching and learning. It shows evidence that LO's are reviewed continuously by teachers, moderators and program leaders, improved over time and linked well to the course topics, lesson plans, and assessment.

2. Lesson Plans: A good course portfolio includes lesson plans that are well designed, clearly specify the LO's covered by the lesson, clearly show the topics covered by the lesson, clearly show the teaching methods, and inform the reader that lessons are well planned and conducted.

5. Tell us about your hobbies

I like fishing a lot.

6. Tell us about your favourite food

Chicken Machboos (Bahraini Chicken & Rice)

7. Tell us about the book you are reading now

The Holy Qur'an

8. Final words

I wish ASU the best of luck and wish everyone a healthy stay.

"If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one".

3. Exams: A good course portfolio provides evidence that exams have been designed according to the standards, measure the ILO's, reflect the actual level of students and that student have been treated fairly. In addition, it is important that the course portfolio shows evidence that exams have been moderated objectively and that moderation has resulted in improvement rather than they were just a way for detection of errors. Moderation forms need to be available and officially submitted in order to ensure that the whole process has been conducted according to the university standard.

One of the important aspects of the assessment process is to provide feedback to students on their answer sheets after marking so that they know their weaknesses and how they can improve their performance. Therefore, assessment samples should show evidence that feedback was given to individual students and that students read and understood it by signing the answer sheet of the exam.

4. Coursework: The objective of coursework is to measure LO's that cannot be measured by exams such as transferrable skills including: presentation skills, writing skills, etc. It is therefore important that the course portfolio provides evidence that the coursework achieved its objectives. Coursework samples should show feedback to students, and most importantly a plagiarism check of the submitted report by students. Furthermore, a typical course portfolio should include the "Coursework Brief" which should contain clear rubrics of marking, instructions, notes on plagiarism policy, etc.. It is of great importance that the course portfolio shows evidence that plagiarism checks are taken seriously by teachers and that plagiarized cases are dealt with according to the university policy.

5. Course Evaluation Reports: CER's should reflect the analysis of achievement of LO's, hence, a good course portfolio would show that the CER's have been used to improve the process of teaching over semesters. It is not the objective of CER's to just produce numbers but rather to draw conclusions on how to improve the achievement of LO's by students.

Overall, course portfolios are our evidence that the teaching and learning process is bona-fide and that continuous improvement is happening. We all should feel that our course portfolios are important not because we are required to maintain them but because they are our tool for improving our teaching and our careers.

LEVEL S ENGINEERING STUDENTS VISIT TO THE LABORATORIES

As part of the module titled "Constructing the Built Environment" taught by Dr Islam Abohela, Head of the Civil and Architectural Engineering Department, students of level S attended a laboratory introduction class.



This introduction was carried out by the supervisor of Engineering Laboratories, Engineer Mohammad Salameh. The students were first introduced to the safety standards and precautions for working in the lab. They were also introduced to the Personal Protective Equipment's (PPE) and hand tools as well as other machines that will be frequently used during their journey as engineering students and in their career as engineers.

REPORT ON SURVEYING PROJECT

Students of the Civil and Construction Engineering Course (Level 4), carried out surveying of our university campus and streets as a part of their coursework of the module titled “Surveying and Structures 1”, instructed by Dr. Hamdy Alsayed.



In an attempt to practice what they have learned in the classroom, the project was carried out under the supervision and guidance of the supervisor of the engineering laboratories, Engineer Mohammad Salameh. The students were divided into groups of 2-3 members to carry out the project. The project was completed and students were asked to submit drawings in AutoCAD format using the measurements they obtained from the surveying activity. The submitted drawings have demonstrated the proficiency of the students in using the surveying equipment. Well done our engineers to be.

INTERNSHIP FOR THE COMPUTER SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

Dr. Jamal AlSultan, the Internship Course Coordinator at the Department of Computer Science carried out a site visit to students enrolled on this course last week. The site visit was for the students who are currently doing internships at a number of companies: ADRI (Arabic Digital Reform Institute), Brinc Batelco IoT Hub, Batelco Building, Manama. During the visit, Dr Jamal met with the on-site supervisor, who expressed his satisfaction with the performance of our students, and praised their commitment to work and for their knowledge in their field of study.



THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE SOCIAL GATHERING

The Social Committee of the College of Arts and Science organized on Saturday, 30 March, a gathering for the College members to tighten the relationships between its members and to get out of the work pressure in order to give everyone a stronger impetus to move forward with what is required to be done by everyone.



The gathering took place at Prince Khalifa bin Salman Park - Al Hidd where everyone enjoyed the wonderful weather where they had lunch.



Prof. Ayman Al-Dmoor, Acting Dean of College of Arts and Science thanked the social committee for this activity on behalf of the College members and encouraged the organization of such activities that increase the relations between the members of the team and increase the productivity.

BIG DATA SYMPOSIUM AND OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF M.SC. IN BIG DATA SCIENCE AND ANALYTICS

Dr. Ahmad Shatat, Head of Department of Management of Information Science, and Dr. Moaiad Khader, Head of Department of Computer Science attended Big Data Symposium 2019 which was held on Monday 1 April 2019 at the Wyndham Garden Hotel



The event brought together industry leaders, IT professionals and representatives from private and public sectors both from Bahrain and overseas to share insights, challenges, and opportunities provided by big data. The Symposium addressed the value proposition that organizations around the world are finding challenging which is how to turn big data into smart data..

COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENTS INTERVIEWED THE PRESIDENT OF APPLIED SCIENCE UNIVERSITY

On 2 April 2019, Computer Science students of Technical Communication Skills Course conducted an interview with Professor Ghassan Aouad, the University President, who is an inspirational leader to all students at ASU and a leader to look up to. The interview started off with the President's introducing himself, where he shared his life and professional experiences with the students.



Upon entering the office of Professor Ghassan Aouad, the first impression is the lack of free space on his walls. Besides the large panoramic window overlooking the area, every bit of the wall is covered with photographs of the President with dignitaries and friends, degrees and certificates, and even several hand drawn illustrations of the President himself. These, along with the dozens of awards and trophies on the shelves below them hint at a very interesting and rich history.

What strikes you first about the President is his humility. If he is bothered at all by a dozen first year students crowding up his office at 9 AM in the morning, he does not show it in the slightest. Instead he warmly greets each of us in turn, asks for our names, and invites us to sit down, even giving up his own fancy office chair so that everyone would be comfortable.

A few of us sit at the conference table with him, and after these brief introductions, we launch into asking questions so as to make the most of the time we have.

At the moment, all Masters degrees that the university offers are in Arabic. Are there any future plans for Masters programs in English?

This opening question is very important to the students in the room, as all of us are first or second year Computer Science students taking the course in English. He tells us about how in Bahrain, the plethora of courses ASU has offered in both English and Arabic for the last 15 years is a very unique selling point, since most Bahraini universities for the most part excessively focus on one language or the other.

In the last few years, ASU has, in association with the Cardiff Metropolitan University and London South Bank University, expanded to offer several more English courses in business and engineering fields.



"Computer Science is a very important field of study, as it is a growing market in all fields today. Everyone is talking about Artificial Intelligence, robotics, and the applications of these subjects. For many years in the future, there is going to be a high demand for computer scientists and engineers. We hope soon to introduce Masters programs in English for Computer Science, or at least specific branches of it such as A.I. research. We have a strategic plan to handle the market demand for these kinds of jobs."

What kind of assistance can I receive from the University to help me develop my own programs?

We hear about the knowledge management system developed by the University staff to allow lecturers to produce their own course portfolios, and how it's a much more streamlined and easy to access process than when everything needed to be done manually. He uses this as an example of the kind of beneficial program that the University can help with sponsoring, and the kind of support they're ready to give to students working in research and development.

How do you think the University will look in five years?

"If you don't know your past, you can't plan for your future."

On this note, he tells us about the achievements of ASU in the last few years: full confidence in every single degree program, awaiting the news about our application for accreditation, and the hosting of an academic center for HEA staff training, the only one in a private Bahraini university to be certified by the HEA UK. ASU also ranks in the top 4% of QS University Rankings in the Arab region, the building itself has won several consecutive awards from the Capital Governorate, and most recently, the ASU football team won the inter-university championship. He also mentioned the ISO certification and green metric ranking.

In terms of plans for the future, there is hope for more Masters programs, a more international reputation, and more emphasis on research.

What was the career path that led you to where you are today?

The President smiles at this question, and he pauses for a moment as his mind takes him back to the past. He tells us about studying for his Bachelors in Civil Engineering in the middle of civil war in his home country of Lebanon, and how he never intended to do any further study beyond that point. However, he got sponsored by the Hariri Foundation, and earned his Masters in the UK, followed by a PhD.

He applied for a job as a database administrator at Birmingham University, something he was vastly overqualified for but done for desperation, but was rejected nonetheless (being lucky that he was rejected).

He did get a job at the University of Salford as a Research Fellow, and rose through the ranks, from fellow to lecturer to full time professor at an unprecedented rate, and then moving on further to become the Vice President, which was very rare for an Arab Muslim. He mentioned his mentor, Prof Peter Brandon, who adopted him academically and helped him achieve a lot more.

“When it comes to positions of leadership, it’s not enough to just be familiar with the technical side of management, you need to have the right social skills and emotional intelligence. It’s not an easy job, but it’s worth it when you see your students succeeding.”

What are the most pressing priorities you are facing with the University?

“For me, the top priority with anything is quality. Quality is what drives everything in this life, and once you aim for it, you can make everything better.”

In terms of specifics, he tells us about the plans to include new programs, focusing again in the importance of more English ones, as well as developing a more research based culture for the university, and diversifying and modernizing teaching and learning methods.

How do you see your students?

“Our students are very, very talented, as you can see from the vast array of activities, clubs, teams, and of course academic performance. To unlock their full potential, you need to see them as you would your own children, respecting their unique strengths and weaknesses, and their different approaches to learning.”

What do you feel is lacking in the University, and how would you improve it?

He laughs at this question, and tells us we’ve put him on the spot. He does tell us that in everything, there is always room to improve. The University is currently lacking in good sports facilities, which is why there are plans for a state of the art sports hall on campus, to enable a huge variety of physical activities and improve performance and reputation. He also feels that there is an element of internationalism somewhat missing from the staff, which is one of the things being focused on in training, and that the University could have a stronger focus on research and innovation.

Of all the countries you’ve worked in, which is your favorite?



He tells how he will always have a natural affection for Lebanon, as he was born there, though he may not want to live there again. He made the United Kingdom his second home for 20 years, gained citizenship there, and achieved a lot, but the high rate of taxation made saving money hard. He then lived in Dubai for a few years, a place that everyone loves, followed by 18 months in Kuwait, which he enjoyed. It was then that he was invited by Prof Waheed who he has known for over 25 years to come to Bahrain and become President of ASU and to build on what was achieved by Prof Waheed.

“I had visited Bahrain many times over the years for a friend of mine, and had fallen in love with the country long before moving here. It’s now been four and a half years, and everything, the lifestyle, the people, is wonderful. Everything you get in Dubai, you have it here, but since I come from a small village in Lebanon,

I appreciate how small Bahrain is. All factors considered, Bahrain would have to be my favorite. I have visited 45 different countries in my life, but when the plane lands back in Bahrain, I feel relaxed and at peace.”

Any final words of advice?

“Work hard. It may be tempting to use this time to enjoy life as much as you can, but to achieve more, you need to find the right balance between work and enjoyment. Work hard while you’re young and capable, and it will benefit you for the rest of your life.”

On this note, our time ran short and the interview had to conclude, though it was clear the President could have gladly continued answering questions if he didn’t have prior engagements. He took a group photo with us, and gave us the backstory on some of the photos and illustrations up on his wall, especially those related to the CIOB and how he managed to become their global president. I left his office with a lot to think about, but most of all, a sense of satisfaction that our University is in good hands.

Reported by Abdullah Quadir

INTERVIEW WITH ALUMNUS

Name:	Hesa Khaled Rashed Fakhroo
Workplace:	Hope Institute for Special Education
Academic Degree	Bachelor
Academic Major	Political Science
Tell us about your Experience at ASU in terms of learning environment and teaching methods.	ASU is more than gaining a degree; it's an experience that prepared me for the future. I gained so many skills; especially when I had to do numerous presentations throughout university; as I'm sure most people do. I've always hated presentations; however, the more I've done them, the more my confidence grew and I found I was getting much better at talking in front of a group of people.
What did you enjoy the most about your experience at ASU?	Media Club which provided me with the opportunity to express and develop my ideas and talents through media, technology and communication.
Tell us a success story inspired by ASU.	Participating in organizing university events that allowed me to effectively interact with others, like communication, attitude, and work ethics. I learnt the best way to communicate with both individuals and large groups, and I gained emotional intelligence as I develop new relationships. Also, I was the head of public relation committee in the Alumni Club Board of Directors for its third cycle.

In your Opinion, What are the Improvement areas you would like to see at ASU in the future?

Everything is perfect

Final words

Join us at ASU's Alumni Club ☺

Interviewed By: Maheera Faisal, Alumni Affairs Committee Chair; ASU Alumni Club

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Love yourself first and everything else falls into line. You really have to love yourself to get anything done in this world."

Lucille Ball

Happy Reading!