



From left to right: Dea Dlawar, Ahmed Abdullah, Shajwan Imad (Board of Directors Secretary), Dr. Hemin Latif, Geoffrey Gresk (Co-Chair), Nigar Ismaeel Mahmood, Mohamad Sabir, Aveen Azad, Banu Ali (Co-Chair), Alan Awilkadir, Hemn Bakr Abdullah, Laylan Amir (Treasurer)

## A Summary of AUIS Alumni Association Board of Directors Meetings



Shajwan Imad

On Feb 1st the voting began for the first elected AUIS Alumni Association Board of Directors. The elected 10 alumni members are both from the undergraduate and graduate MBA programs. After being introduced to the Alumni Association constitution and how the board can contribute to AUIS, the board internally elected Banu Ali as the alumni co-chair, I (Shajwan Imad) for secretary, and Laylan Amir as the board treasurer. The board meets on monthly basis, to discuss any issues that are shared by alumni and ini-

tiatives the board can start.

Alumni can reach us easily either by email ([alumni.association@auis.edu.krd](mailto:alumni.association@auis.edu.krd)) or by the Facebook group (AUIS Alumni Association Cafe) that the board created to give the alumni a reachable platform to communicate their issues and thoughts.

With the help of AUIS & donors, the board has been able to come together with its limited resources to welcome the Fall 2014-Spring 2015 graduates to the Alumni Association with a lovely gesture, a beautiful cake! We've managed to communicate issues that were raised by some alumni. In addition, we have highlighted some draft ideas for future AUIS scholarships that can benefit some students.

The Board of Directors' Newsletter is the newest contribution to the Alumni Association, the initiative is currently steered by Laylan. It will feature alumni stories, events, and pieces that any alumni would like to share on the Newsletter. Also, recently the Board arranged a charity football match where donations were collected for the refugees (details coming in the next issue).

The board gives its warm gratitude to the people who have made it possible: Professor Hemin Omer, Mr. Geoffrey Gresk, Ms. Morgan McDaniel, and Mr. Paul Craft.

We hope that every term, board directors can give more and more to the Alumni Association and our second home, AUIS.

Want to be part of AAN?

Write an article.

Tell a success story.

Share an idea with alumni.

Motivate your colleagues.

Send us an email  
[auisalumninewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:auisalumninewsletter@gmail.com)

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- Hussein Al-Azzawi
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- Mohammed Nabeel
- Shajwan Imad

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# Yearning to You, AUIS.



Hussein Al-Azzawi

Dear AUIS:

I hope this message finds you well.

How are you? How is life treating you? I just wish all is great with you. I know it has been a while I have not checked on you, but I hope you will understand how busy I got after graduation, not only with work but with everything. Although I was dying to graduate, dying to leave you, and dying to have a new fresh start, I still sometimes miss you. I miss your confusing heating system, miss your teachers including the annoying ones, and miss your students even those who added me on Facebook but never spoke to me

when we met.

I miss the lentil soup in the morning, The Voice room, Tai chi sessions, Qallawa meetings, and the Monday choir; I guess I miss being vibrant!

Sometimes when I visit you for a paperwork, I do not feel I belong to you as I used to be. This made me questioning whether the place or the people who would make a person attached to an entity. There are not many people I know by now. Almost all friends graduated, and most of the teachers I know left the university. But don't worry, you will always have a special place in my heart and mind.

Regardless the continuous complaints I made about you when I was a student, and although believing in luck is a controversial issue, I would say I was lucky to be at you. A student may not re-

alize that till graduation! You have formed me to become the person I am proud of today. You supported me with knowledge and confidence. With you, I could get the best education in Iraq. I do not want to apologize for my complainants because I realized I was complaining about many things just because I love you so much that I wanted you to be perfect.

Through you I learnt, had fun, explored new things, made friends for life, met my love, and found the job I like... AUIS... You just could not be better! Keep in touch.

*Sincerely,  
Your student*

# The Joy of Teaching in Iraq



Jim Owens from his office at US with Kurdistan flag, AUIS web page and Stella his dog



Wow! Where has the time gone? As the fall semester winds down here at the University of Southern Maine, I realize that five years ago my first semester as a senior lecturer at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani was also winding down—or at least the first part of it. In those days, the fall semester at AUIS didn't end in December because of the relatively late October start. Still, after nearly three months “in country” and ten weeks of teaching in a new place, working with students from a different culture, I was ready for a break.

A few weeks before my flight home for the holiday break, I recorded my first impressions of teaching in Iraq in an op-ed piece for *Inside Higher Ed*, “the online source for news, opinion and jobs for all of higher education.”

In an article titled “The Joy of Teaching in Iraq,” I did my best to put into words the thoughts and feelings running through my mind during those first weeks of working with AUIS students, many of whom were also beginning their first semester in the academic program. Although I arrived in Sulaimani with fully 15 years of teaching experience under my belt, I found myself unprepared in numerous ways to reconcile the dynamics of my classes at AUIS with my experience of teaching in the US.

In the *Inside Higher Ed* article, I summed up the differences in seven bullet points. I thought it might be interesting to look back now, five years later and two-and-a-half years after my final semester at AUIS, and reflect on those initial impressions. How did my first impressions of teaching at AUIS hold up over the course of my three-year tenure at the

university? And what about now, a couple of years after my return to teaching American undergraduates?

Here then is a look back at my initial impressions of AUIS students in the fall of 2010, with comments informed by my later experiences.

Students here come to class wide awake and cheerful.

Wide-awake students in an 8:00 am math class? This was probably one of the most surprising things I observed in my first weeks at AUIS, and nothing about this changed during my time there. In contrast, at least one college where I've taught in the US had no 8:00 am classes, because they were so unpopular. Students here show up for class without a bunch of electronics.

Eventually, students' phones became much more evident in class, often coming out of pockets or purses to rest on table tops as students took their seats in the computer labs. Still, I rarely if ever noticed a student texting or browsing on their phones during class.

In both their dress and demeanor, students here display a positive attitude toward learning.

The way students dressed was another area of great difference in my experience and remained consistent throughout my time at AUIS. Most students came to campus dressed in “business casual” attire though many students regularly dressed more formally. The way students chose to dress seemed a clear signal that they considered attending university to be serious business.

Although my students come from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, I haven't noticed that they split up into cliques.

As I allowed in my original article, not really understanding the culture may have prevented me from recognizing fault lines between groups of students. During my time at

AUIS, I did become aware of certain tensions, yet I never saw or sensed any tension or disruption in the classroom. Whatever issues did exist among my students remained well in the background.

Students here readily raise their hands to ask or answer questions and to contribute to class discussions.

I was frankly astonished by the high level of engagement AUIS students exhibited in class, and not just in my 8:00 am math classes. It's impossible to overstate how much easier an instructor's job in the classroom becomes when students are so engaged. The challenge I faced with many students was in keeping them engaged outside the classroom, in their work on assignments and in preparing for exams.

Students here have a great deal of respect for their teachers.

I found AUIS students to be unflinchingly polite and respectful of faculty. When speaking to me in person or via email, students invariably addressed me as “Professor,” “Sir” or “Doctor.” Once, when I gently objected to being called doctor on the basis that I have not completed a doctoral degree, one student very politely advised me to get over it. He explained that as far as he and his classmates were concerned, my highest degree was beside the point. “Doctor” was simply a term of respect, like any other they used when speaking to their instructors. Why should they be responsible for remembering who among the faculty had doctorates and who didn't? After giving the matter some additional thought, I took the student's advice. To date, some AUIS graduates who have stayed in touch still call me “Doctor.” I'd be lying if I said it bothers me.

Finally, and most importantly, the students here are willing to take risks. They readily volunteer answers to complicated questions that come up in class, and they are not afraid to openly explore unfamiliar ideas and concepts, asking numerous questions along the way.

AUIS students' willingness to take such risks in the classroom demonstrated a very high level of trust, to a degree I found truly humbling. In the concluding paragraphs, I described them as “the perfect students,” who freed me “to ply my craft as an educator without boundaries.” I feel as strongly about that statement today as I did when I wrote those words five years ago. I learned a tremendous amount from the experience of working with AUIS students, and I left Iraq a better teacher. For that gift and for a lifetime's worth of wonderful memories, I will be forever grateful to them.



Bahra Louqman wears AUIS shirt.



MA Graduation Moments at Lund University.

## Thankful but with a wish



Bahra Louqman Salih

We take so many things for granted in this life till the moment we realize that someone else is desperately praying to have what we have taken for granted. I never appreciated the free vitamin D I have been directly receiving from the sun in my entire life till I lived in Sweden where I had to receive vitamin D through pills. I felt the same way about AUIS. I did not realize how lucky I am to be an AUIS alumna till fall 2013 when I landed in Sweden to study my master's degree at the top 70th university in the world – Lund University.

Two months prior to my graduation date, May 31, 2013, in which I received the graduating honor of Cum Laude, I applied for Erasmus Mundus full-merit scholarship to start my post-graduate studies abroad. It was only 10 days before the graduation commencement that I received a congratulating email as I was one of the very few selected master's candidates from Iraq (If I remember correctly, I think only seven students were selected from Iraq) to the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University (CMES), Sweden. That was the moment when no human language had the power to express what I felt deep down in my heart. Feeling happy, grateful and thankful were not enough. It is worth mentioning that Arez Hussen, who is also an AUIS alumna and my husband, was also selected

to the same master's program. Shortly after, I found myself studying at one of the most prestigious universities in the world and working in teams with a group of talented and yet international students and professors from all over the world. I thrived on all the challenges and frustrations I faced during the endless writing process within my two year program and accomplished my master's thesis with fruitful results.

It was only then when I realized what it means to be an AUIS alumna. I realized that AUIS alumni are just as international and competent as the alumni from the advanced and high-ranking universities in the rest of the world. Further, I realized that AUIS not only produces future leaders for the country, but also regional and international leader. Over the past two years in Sweden, I lived my everyday life feeling grateful for having AUIS as a valuable part of overall identity. I used to wear both AUIS T-shirt and CMES T-shirt from time to time while attending lectures. It was one of those unexpected sunny days when my Methods professor asked me, "I went to Iraqi Kurdistan a couple of years ago, but never came across a person speaking in such fluent English as you do, how come you speak and write in such English?"

I was very pleased by his question because it was yet another unique opportunity for me to tell the world that right at the heart of the war zone lies an enlightening place called the American University of Iraq, Sulaimania, which produces the future innovative and pro-

ductive leaders to make a difference in the world, and more specifically, to make Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan a better place.

In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly discuss one of the very frustrating challenges I had to overcome during my master's program. Although AUIS has greatly developed in several regards since my graduation, two things that I very much wished to learn at AUIS are methodology and theory knowledge, which were both absent in the academic curriculums in my time. AUIS taught me how speak fluent English and write academic papers, but not specifically what methods and theories to approach while conducting academic research. This indeed posed a lot of difficulties and frustrations on me later on in my thesis writing process. It was only then when I realized that I completely lack the two very fundamental academic skills such as: a) what methodological approaches, strategies and instruments to use while conducting academically scientific research, and b) what theories to apply while explaining and exploring a certain research phenomenon. I can confidently make the claim that this has been the case for all the AUIS alumnae who have pursued their postgraduate studies abroad. Therefore, I truly urge the AUIS Board of Trustee and the Presidency to take this matter into deep consideration and work on including methods and theory classes into the curriculums. AUIS students must be well-equipped with these two utmost necessary academic and rather scientific knowledge, because it will help them not only in their academic oriented fields but also in their day-to-day lives.

# A Message to Our Undergrads



Muhammed Nabeel

I guess I can proudly and honestly say that I owe everything I got to AUIS. Allow me to tell you why by humbly summarizing my story. So regardless to the fact that before I started my freshman year in AUIS, I had a very busy and difficult life just like any of you. Yet, my actual life started in that year. I was broke with a lot of responsibilities, a teenager with overwhelming emotions and a student with a lot of ambitions. I was disoriented, aimless, full of ego, immature with no complete personality or a sense of who I am or what I wanted to be. Ironically, back then I thought I was a perfect genius; I couldn't be more wrong.

As you go and continue your studies and your life at AUIS, you start to grow. Your personality starts to form

who you are and what you want to be. Your brain starts to flourish and you start to know what life means and to appreciate it. I started to search for a job and I had a part-time job, sometimes two, for almost all the time during my studies. It was tough. One day my roommate and I fried cucumber for dinner, yes cucumber that's how bad it was.

I have gained friends that were truly a family, that helped me and taught me what friendship is. I have loved and knew what it means to be in love. I have hated and knew how that feels. I have been broken and fixed, in debt and rich. I've got Fs and As. I was at the dorms then got a home. I have been sick and healed. I've had long hair no beard, and I have had short hair full beard. I have had it all.

It is a complete life to prepare you for another life. I have learnt to live because of AUIS.

I have learnt to deal with angry obsessive professor, the naive nice, the

atheist, and the religious one; I've read and written poetry while I have traded stocks. I've studied music while memorizing religion. I have had three scholarships and studied in the US. I've done it all. I have discovered myself and that's a treasure that you can't find on an Island, yet you have to live it. I went on and pushed back and graduated with a 3.5 GPA and started my new life.

I got hired at Facebook, one of the best companies in the world. I used AUIS students' resources, which we sometimes underestimate, to apply. AUIS has prepared me to compete with thousands of undergraduates from all over the world, and be able to pursue my dreams. I am supporting my family, impacting people's lives, meeting new people, traveling, helping back my beloved country.

I am who I want to be. I can say I am happy and it is not an easy word to say. It is all because of AUIS. I have lived my AUIS life, make sure you don't miss yours.



AUIS dorms, Raparin 2011, During my life at AUIS.



Facebook, Dublin, After AUIS.

# Where are you from?



Hanar Marouf

From a small, cozy office working as marketing and media executive in Erbil to Washington DC where not a single spot feels like home, I moved for a temporary time. It was a challengeable decision, but I did, as I believe youth should live wild and discover the world to bring back the best out of it to their lands.

My vision was different this time from the other times visiting the United States. In my previous visits, very little talked about Kurds and almost no one gave us the attention to be on the breaking news almost twice a week. I assumed from the airport people would know where I come from, people would be impassionate to hear about the Kurdish forces, I had many vivid thoughts like a child's first answer to the question "what will you like to be when you graduate from school?"

From the airport, to the taxi driver, and to the place I live in, not a single person knew where was Kurdistan. In the beginning, I found it offensive that with all the fight, all the international focus on the Kurds as the only boots on the ground, none knew where is Kurdistan geographically located! Only selective, researchers, international studies experts, and some other people who watch the news would know about Kurdistan.

If I am from Kurdistan, does that make any difference? To an American, yes it does, as they are clueless to the origins of my identity and where it is located on the map. In a world where everything is simpler to find than before with the credits to social media, still Kurds are not as known as we all think. Unaware people assume the region to be close to Afghanistan, with no offense, but the stereotype of a conservative society where women are forced to pull out of education, and every single female obliged to wear veil and to take it off the minute she steps on the American soil are common things to hear. From Kurdistan, we live in a bubble of certainty that by now almost every one knows us, and if not Kurds, they would know the Kurdish forces, but plainly that is not what I experience here.

Still with all the publicity and

think tank events on the Kurds and the war on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, Kurds could not go that viral. Though, does that matter? Not really! It is not that important for people to know where we come from, the passion, the fierce love with a voice of pride the minute we say from Kurdistan, does matter. The elucidation of how we bolster our nationality wherever we are, of how our men and women are fighting in the battlefields are what matter to tell the second we replay, "We are from Kurdistan."

A proud nation would do the impossible to show the world how achievable they can be. Almost everyone I meet asks me the same question, "would you like to stay here and get the citizenship?" Without giving a second of quietness to the question, my answer is always No.

Sir, I come from a place where my heroes are dying for the flag of my country to rise against the enemies. I come from a society where our traditions and cultures are far beyond explanation for its valuable meanings in our hearts. I come from a tolerated civilization where everyone is greeted to live in peacefully. Kurdistan is the land of braveries. To this end, youth should stop the thoughts of forever departure, be honored of your land and your nationality, you all are the ones who will make the modification.



# Of Politics and Poetry



Darya Najim

A storm is brewing, the storm of war, and once again, our ship is being pushed, dragged down, and pulled back up. We are scared; we cannot think; we cannot elaborate; we are not able to whisper: Is this how World War III begins?

Images of destruction are everywhere. When on the Internet, I often end up looking at pieces of Syrian bodies under ruined buildings, indiscriminately sent to an ultimate death. A storm is brewing, and once again we feel angry, exacerbated and often hopeless. Prosperity and the good life no longer have a place in our minds as we try to find a spot of light at the end of the tunnel. Do you see any light? I can't see much myself. I try to sooth my anxiety with literature, look for the dues ex machine, but end up with vicious cycle in Waiting for Godot.

Are we damned to a perpetuate state of war and waiting? A storm is brewing, and once again some of us shake our hands with Machiavelli, others fall in love with Robespierre while the majority fall into Don Quixote-ian dream. Something deep inside us says that this is not the end. Even if this one ends, another one emerges. We feel like Phoenix, rising and re-emerging each time, just to fall into our ash once again. Yet we do not admit one thing: war is a fruit of our worldview and culture. Each and every one of us unleashes this storm just to feel dismantled by its consequences. A good friend of mine told me: Culture is more political than politics. To see any spot at the end of the tunnel, to survive this vicious circle, we do not need new defense mechanisms, but new perspectives; we need to look through our problems. That's the only spot available to us.

# M B A

## Why you should go for an MBA?



Ahmed Abdullah

Today, due to a rapidly evolving world, simultaneously to the challenges in the global marketplace, both business world and life in general have been productively affected. Accordingly, it becomes vital for all organizations to hire individuals with high business perspicacity from the very first moment. An MBA could face these constant diversities and challenges in the swarmed marketplace by boosting your skills and foundation business principles in order to succeed in the business world and to find rewarding careers in the public or private sectors. Here are several reasons why you should go for an MBA:

### **Boosting Your Career Opportunity:**

MBA holders are admirable for extensive companies, which compete to make inefficiencies internally; an MBA holder gets the chance to be required even in non-profit organizations as well. The significance of an MBA degree has extended, especially because of the performance-oriented expert world, particularly the majority of the people have the same qualities and accreditation that you acquired. Yet, an MBA differentiates you from others by outfitting you with the planning you need to explore your options to change your present career if its not enough, or give you the adaptability to climb into a managerial position within your current career with a charge of higher salaries. So, expect after you get an MBA certificate from accreditation's college such as AUIS to get more job opportunities on an ongoing basis. Nonetheless, when the economy is terrible, despite having an MBA you might still face difficulty in acquiring a productive employment offer, but still an MBA degree could be considered an asset. According to (mastersportal), It may be evaluated that 70% of the MBA graduates worldwide are senior managers or board directors, this show how an MBA can help you climb the ladder quicker and

more efficiently.

### **Getting an advantage from your Education or Knowledge:**

The Information that you gain from an MBA program could be a guideline of establishing your own specific business. However, books or webs are not always the actual knowledge to advance your professional life or business, but the academic debates with your classmates and with your professors during the business class in AUIS are the genuine learning and extraordinary degree enhancing (crackverbal). Furthermore, an MBA program will furnish you with concrete and a fruitful instructional techniques which contains: case study, presentations, projects, research papers etc. Likewise, an MBA program sets you up to work at any industry. Clusters of progression are available in the MBA program, such as the Human Resources management, marketing, finance, statistics, economics, organization behavior, leadership and entrepreneurship and strategy. These courses set up the scheme of business comprehension.

### **Network Resources and Self-Development:**

AUIS instructing style, funda-

mentally changes your point of view. Professionally, it would empower collaboration, expedite an opportunity to associate with expert, capable and powerful individuals who hold managerial positions in significant companies or might own the group of companies, also connect with a group of alumni who are working at an extensive variety of organizations, this would be useful for guidance, job searches and professional contacts. Personally, an MBA gives you unrivaled experience in dealing with people, accomplishing your objectives, proper management of time and effective planning, and other experiences that most likely would be helpful in work or personal life, and the social prestige granted by an MBA degree. Likewise, it will help you acknowledge how little you comprehend about the universe.

All the above mentioned reasons might encourage you to have a Master of Business Administration from the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani. Worth mentioning, that AUIS now offers an MBA degree program with specializations in Leadership, Project Management and Finance. For further information, see <http://auis.edu.krd/About-AUIS-Home>.

