

# Annual University Student Internship Program: June - August 2009

The National Council's Model Arab League/Arab-U.S. Relations Youth Leadership Development Program has been linked for many years to the Council's **Annual University Student Summer Internship Program**. The program's participants are alumni of the Models and other rising young American leaders of tomorrow. U.S. Ambassador Edward Gnehm (Ret.) made it possible for this past summer's program to be administered again in association with The George Washington University's (GWU) Institute for Middle East Studies in the Elliott School of International Affairs. Ambassador Gnehm is a member of the GWU faculty where he holds the Kuwait Chair in Gulf Studies. As in previous years, the 2009 Program provided fertile training ground and an invaluable firsthand professional work experience for young American leaders interested in a career devoted to improving U.S.-Arab relations.



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*The National Council expresses its appreciation to The George Washington University and The Elliott School of International Affairs for the use of its seminar facilities for the 2009 Summer Internship Program in the nation's capital.*

The program, which lasts from June 1-August 8, provides students an opportunity to work in the nation's capital at 14 nongovernmental organizations involved in one way or another in efforts to improve Arab-U.S. relations. The experience is one that could not possibly be duplicated or paralleled by the students' university studies on campus. In addition to their time assisting with the office routines of their host organizations, the interns meet and are briefed as well as mentored several times a week by some of America's most renowned specialists in international relations as they pertain to the Arab world.

By design, the primary focus of the academic component of the program centers on a sub-region of the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world: *Arabia and the Gulf*. The reason relates to three truisms with implications for American and other countries' needs, concerns, interests, objectives and relations. First, this particular region, together with its maritime routes, has long been

regarded globally as the epicenter of the most strategically and economically vital energy resources that drive the engines of the world's economies.



*As these maps illustrate, the academic focus of the internship program is on Arabia and the Gulf, which despite being of vital strategic and economic importance globally remains little understood by most Americans and many others.*



*Dr. Anthony (L) chairs a session in which he and the interns analyze and discuss issues relating to the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.*



*Mr. Essa Mohamed Al Mannai, First Secretary, hosted a luncheon and briefing for the interns at the Embassy of the State of Qatar. The interns learned of Qatar's rapid emergence as one of the world's most important producers of liquefied natural gas, its annual hosting of international conferences focusing on trade issues as well as multi-faith dialogue, and its role in mediating various regional disputes.*

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Second, Arabia and the Gulf are front and center among some of the most pressing international issues relating to war and peace. Indeed, it is the one part of the planet more than any other to which, on three separate occasions, large numbers of American and other foreign armed forces have been mobilized and deployed in the past quarter of a century. Third, the ongoing importance to much of humankind represented by these nine countries – Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen -- is undeniable. Despite this, the number of Americans who specialize in this sub-region and its member states remains exceptionally limited.

Accordingly, one of the program's objectives is to increase the number of foreign affairs practitioners that are as knowledgeable of Arabia and the Gulf's internal and external dynamics as possible. To that end, most of the lectures address issues related to the member-states' systems of governance, political realities, economic and social development, as well as foreign affairs, on one hand, and, on the other, the relationships of the United States with this Arab sub-region and its neighbors -- and *vice versa*.



*Escorted by Dr. Anthony (4<sup>th</sup> from left), the interns were hosted for a briefing at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by Mr. Nail Al Jubeir, the Embassy's First Secretary and Director of Information.*



*The interns pose for a group picture during a briefing at the National Council's office.*

Program alumni currently serve as senior diplomats in American embassies in the Arab world, in U.S. government executive branch agencies as well as Congressional committees dealing with U.S.-Arab policy issues, major national and international print as well as broadcast media, leading American corporations engaged in U.S.-Arab trade, investment, technology cooperation, and the establishment of joint commercial ventures, and as teachers of Arabic and Arab area studies in American universities.

The Arab-U.S. relations programs, activities, and functions represented by the fourteen organizations and corporations that provided the professional work experience component of this year's program are varied. Included are educational development and exchange, bimonthly and quarterly publications, humanitarian relief, public broadcasting, academic area studies, international transportation, foreign trade, and peace and justice advocacy. An additional feature of the program is site visits to public and private sector institutions such as Arab embassies, energy corporations, congressional committees, and executive branch agencies.



*One of the highlights of the program was the opportunity for the interns to have a guided tour of the Department of State's formal diplomatic reception rooms after a briefing and discussion session with Ambassador Ronald L. Schlicher, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State.*



*The interns pose with Bahraini Ambassador to the United States Houda Ezra Ebrahim Nonoo (center), who hosted and briefed them at the Embassy of Bahrain.*

Administering this year's program again were National Council President Dr. John Duke Anthony as Chairman and lead lecturer, Vice President for Programs Dr. James A. Winship as Coordinator and lecturer, and Ms. Megan Geissler, Model Arab League Coordinator and Special Assistant. The National Council wishes to express its appreciation to the Olayan Group for its support for this program.