Message from the Director

It is my pleasure to announce the inaugural newsletter of the Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd Program for Strategic Research and Studies (PMBF). This unique program, designed in cooperation with Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University (PMU) in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia, and the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando, Florida, aims to advance public knowledge and awareness about issues of interest to both U.S. and Saudi cultures, promote research and help facilitate educational ties and other mutually beneficial initiatives. Using an inter-disciplinary and collaborative approach, the program aims to enhance debate, dialogue, partnership-building and scholarship in a number of fields such as culture, economy, security and U.S.-Saudi relations. PMBF will highlight these subjects through public presentations featuring distinguished visitors; an annual forum; special, topical seminars; scholarly and research activities; the exchange of scholars, practitioners and students; and course development. We invite you to attend events hosted by PMBF and expand your knowledge of Saudi Arabia and its relationship with the U.S.

David Dumke

PMBF News and Update

Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd Awarded Honorary Doctorate by UCF

UCF and the PMBF Program were honored to host Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd during his April 14 visit to Orlando. Prince Mohamed Bin Fahd, for whom the PMBF Program is named, was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Public Service for his contributions to education, social welfare, and international affairs. The Prince, the former Governor of Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province, has long worked to improve US-Saudi bilateral relations, including providing critical support in the establishment of the PMBF Program at UCF. The special ceremony for the Prince was hosted by UCF President John C. Hitt, and attended by Provost Dale Whittaker, members of the Board of Trustees, and Deans of all the UCF Colleges. Prince Mohammad was joined by a delegation from Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia, as well as three other members of the Saudi royal family. During a speech at the ceremony, Prince Mohammad expressed his gratitude to UCF, highlighted the critical role U.S. universities and institutions have played in developing Saudi Arabia, and urged the audience to keep working to strengthen the bonds between Saudi Arabia and the United States.
Jeremy Sharp of CRS visits UCF
Veteran Congressional Research Service (CRS) Middle East Specialist Jeremy Sharp visited UCF in early April. CRS is a division of the Library of Congress, and functions as an in-house, non-partisan think tank for the US House of Representatives and Senate. As such, Sharp is an advisor to individual members of Congress, committees, and congressional on matters pertaining to the Middle East. While at UCF, Sharp gave three lectures, was the featured guest at a faculty lunch, and was a panelist at the International Relations Club’s Spring Forum. The IRC panel, which also included PMBF Director David Dumke, focused on American Middle East policy, particularly the changes that may occur during the Trump Administration. Students asked questions about the current political climate in the region, Syria, Egypt, and Yemen. Following the panel, Sharp participated in a luncheon with members of the IRC, fielding questions on policy, congressional decision-making, and his role at CRS.

Former Congressman Bob Clement Visits Orlando
Former Representative Bob Clement, a longtime friend to UCF and the PMBF Program, visited Orlando in early March. Clement had a lengthy career in public service, including serving in the U.S. House of Representatives for 15 years. During that time, he was a member of the International Relations Committee and participated in key debates including the decisions to authorize the use of force against Iraq in 1991 and 2002. Clement gave a guest lecture to students in a Middle East Politics course, met with representatives of campus student organizations, and was interviewed by PMBF interns about politics, foreign policy, public service, and education. In addition, Clement was the featured guest at a book signing event, where he discussed his newly published autobiography, Presidents, Kings, and Convicts: My Journey from the Tennessee Governor’s Residence to the Halls of Congress. The book chronicles his life as the son of a governor, president of a university, and member of Congress.

Tolerance in Education Symposium
The Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd Program hosted “Teaching Tolerance & Peace in Education: American Experiences & International Lessons” on March 27. The symposium, funded in part by a grant provided by the Association of International Education Administrators, brought together civic, education, and business leaders from the local, state, national, and international level to discuss the role of education as a catalyst for tolerance and peace in an increasingly globalized society. The event featured three topical sessions, each moderated by a renowned experts: Dr. James Gibson, Ph.D., of Washington University in St. Louis; Dr. Patricia Avery, Ph.D., of the University of Minnesota; and Dr. Peter Levine, Ph.D., of Tufts University. A forth panel featured community leaders dedicated to finding ways to bring a diverse community together through education. A postmortem assessment was made which described different approaches to peace and tolerance in education, identified projects/programs which promote the concepts, and explained how concepts could be applied internationally, particularly in the Middle East-North African region.

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