The Kuwait Program for Contemporary Arab Culture

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

CENTER FOR ARAB SOCIETIES AND ENVIRONMENTS STUDIES

A collaboration between UC Berkeley and KFAS based at IASTE
BERKELEY AND IASTE

The University of California at Berkeley (UC Berkeley) is the top-ranked public university in the United States and one of the top five universities in the world. Berkeley boasts one of the nation’s largest concentrations of scholars concerned with Arab affairs, in disciplines ranging from history and art to land-use planning and engineering. UC Berkeley is the headquarters of the International Association for the study of Traditional Environments (IASTE), an international body of scholars boasting hundreds of individual and institutional members, many of them working on issues of culture, society, and urbanism in the Middle East.
KFAS AND CASES

To build upon these strengths, IASTE established the Center for Arab Societies and Environments Studies (CASES) to encompass research related to the Arab world. A Collaborative Program for Contemporary Arab Culture was also inaugurated and funded by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS). This initiative leverages existing resources to form an enduring relationship between Arab and Gulf research institutions and the foremost research university in the United States, UC Berkeley.

CASES is the first center of its kind in California (the most populous U.S. state and whose economy would be the seventh-largest in the world if it were a separate nation) for the study of contemporary Arab culture. CASES also plans to extend its activity beyond the type of exchanges that Gulf states have typically established with U.S. institutions. In doing so, it hopes to enlarge the cooperation from mere unequal exchange to true substantive collaboration.
THE PROGRAM FOR CONTEMPORARY ARAB CULTURE

The Program for Contemporary Arab Culture focuses on Arab civilization and contemporary Gulf culture and addresses an important paradox: while people around the world express appreciation for the historic achievements of Arab Muslim civilization and admire the current economic growth of countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), they rarely make the connection between past glories and present-day successes. Among the foundational goals of CASES is support for research that traces this legacy of Arab civilization in contemporary urban developments in the Gulf—a region of the Arab world that has flourished in the last few decades. The program defines the concepts of civilization and culture as encompassing all aspects of the humanities, the social sciences, and the professions—realms in which the Arab world has historically excelled. Its projects focus on the interconnected realms of the arts, architecture, development, planning, and urbanization in an attempt to identify areas of opportunity in cities of the Arab world, and GCC member states in particular. The Program for Contemporary Arab Culture reminds the world that the Persian Gulf, as it is commonly referred to in the West, is also the Arabian Gulf.

AN INITIATIVE OF THE KUWAIT FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCES (KFAS)

The state of Kuwait occupies a leadership position among the countries of the GCC and is globally recognized as the most forward-looking of its member states. Its government places great emphasis on the quality of life, education, and cultural awareness among its citizens. The focus of the collaborative program will initially involve joint activities between UC Berkeley and Kuwait University (KU) before expanding to include activities at other Kuwaiti universities. The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences has generally funded The Program for Contemporary Arab Culture.
PROGRAM GOALS

- Bolster scholarly exchange between the United States and Kuwait and create opportunities for shared research on cultural and urban development.
- Establish ties with long-standing academic units at UC Berkeley that have demonstrated leadership in furthering the study of Arab culture and development in the United States, specifically the College of Environmental Design (CED) and the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE).
- Create opportunities for Kuwaiti and other GCC professionals engaged in all aspects of urban planning, architecture, landscape design, environmental design, new-media design, urban history, and related subjects to pursue advanced post-professional engagement in a region of unmatched resources for such study.
- Inaugurate a strong international program that we hope to call “Berkeley in Kuwait” and “Kuwait in Berkeley.”
- Bolster scholarly exchange between the United States and Kuwait and create opportunities for shared research on cultural and urban development.
COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM

The program has been carefully designed to achieve the aforementioned key goals and create a lasting tribute to Kuwait’s partnership with UC Berkeley. Toward these ends, CASES includes the following components.

**The Teaching Excellence Component**

Including the following elements

- **Teaching Workshop(s)**
  
  Teaching Workshops, each with a duration of one to three days, are held annually at Kuwaiti universities. These workshops focus on methods and approaches to teaching, and each accommodates at least ten to twelve Kuwaiti scholars. Each workshop also focuses on a different faculty group, including junior staff, mid-career staff, senior faculty, and teaching assistants.

- **Teaching Excellence Colloquium and/or Capacity Building Workshop(s) at UC Berkeley**
  
  A Teaching Excellence Colloquium is also offered for capacity building and is specially designed for the Kuwaiti faculty visiting Berkeley.

**The Research Component**

Including the following elements

- **A visiting-scholar/postdoctoral fellowship**
  
  This enables recent Kuwaiti graduates with doctoral degrees to spend one week, one semester, or one academic year at UC Berkeley pursuing their own research.

- **One research fellowship each year**
  
  This allows UC Berkeley faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and advanced Ph.D. candidates to do one to two weeks of fieldwork in Kuwait or to organize an academic event about Kuwait at UC Berkeley.

- **An opportunity for a mid-career or a senior faculty member**
  
  Faculty from Kuwaiti universities may be selected to spend a sabbatical year at UC Berkeley in a department to be agreed upon by the parties.
The Publication Component

This provides a training opportunity for junior faculty at Kuwaiti universities seeking to publish their work in refereed journals. Workshops conducted at UC Berkeley match individual faculty members from KU and other Kuwaiti academic institutions with faculty members at UC Berkeley who act as mentor-hosts during the writing of research papers. The Kuwaiti visiting scholars are nominated by their universities and reviewed by the UC Berkeley Faculty Director before being matched with and accepted by collaborating faculty at UC Berkeley. The program hosts two to four scholars from Kuwaiti institutions, who spend a maximum of one academic year at UC Berkeley.

The Professional Component

This is intended to enhance the interaction between UC Berkeley and the professional schools in Kuwaiti universities in such areas as architecture, engineering, and related applied fields. It offers tailored collaborative initiatives between similar units at the respective institutions. The program may afford undergraduate students of architecture at Kuwaiti universities the opportunity to spend a semester or a year at UC Berkeley taking courses toward their degrees.

The component further includes design workshops of up to two days for participants who may be architecture teaching assistants, graduate students, and undergraduate students. Architecture students from UC Berkeley may travel to Kuwaiti universities accompanied by UC Berkeley faculty during the academic year to spend a week with their counterparts pursuing a joint design studio in which both groups of students collaborate and produce designs to be assessed and compared.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

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