



EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

OF

THE MIDDLE EAST PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

IN

HIGHER EDUCATION

An Assessment of Twelve University Partnerships

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During November and December 2006, and January 2007, twelve university partnerships, funded under the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), were reviewed for evidence of impact related to MEPI higher education goals. Two partnerships each in Bahrain and Oman, one each in Jordan and Morocco, and three each in Tunisia and Egypt were included in the sample. U.S. partners included two private and nine public universities from across the United States.

The assessment focused on evidence of impact related to:

- Strengthened capacity of host country national (HCN) faculty and institutions to deliver quality higher education;
- Increased capacity of HCN higher education faculty and institutions to contribute to reform in MEPI discipline areas or pillars and/or local development goals;
- Sustainability of higher education institutional capacity building; and,
- The value of partnership activity for U.S. faculty, students, and institutions.

First, information was collected from secondary sources: grant applications, partnership agreements between U.S. universities and the American Council on Education (ACE), progress reports and conference reports. Second, academic partners from each U.S. partner institution were queried through structured telephone interviews. Third, site interviews were conducted at HCN partner institutions. The assessment team looked for the following information from each source:

- *Human capacity* building for both HCN and U.S. participants;
- *Institutional capacity* strengthening for both host country and U.S. institutions;
- Contributions to MEPI discipline areas or pillars and/or local development goals; and,
- Service outside the university including public policy advising.

Quantitative findings were tabulated, and qualitative information summarized for each of the assessment questions.

Assessment team members were reminded that all MEPI university partnerships are quite modest ranging from \$100,000 to \$300,000 (83% of the twelve awards in this sample are for \$100,000). The partnerships are funded for a period of only two to three years. Therefore, evidence of expected impact must be realistic in terms of the short time frames and modest funding levels.

As evidence of human capacity building, managers from the twelve partnerships reported that 380 individuals participated in non-degree training, exchanges and internships; and that 35 participants received degrees classified as formal certificates, bachelors, masters, or doctorates as a result of the partnership effort. In addition, faculty members are participating in collaborative research projects with partner universities, others are preparing presentations for professional conferences, and still others are writing articles for academic journals in collaboration with their new colleagues. Faculty described examples of new teaching methods they had learned as a result of their classes and visits to U.S. universities, such as train-the-trainer methods, active

learning and participatory teaching-learning techniques, increased use of the Internet, and distance learning procedures.

The most frequently described examples of impact of institutional capacity strengthening included curricula changes, new academic programs, improved instruction, collaborative research and publications, and service outside the university such as consultations with NGOs, or national policy recommendations. Faculty and staff reported more emphasis on women's issues in the curricula. One institution has added an outside advisory board to encourage faculty to work more directly with the private sector, and three universities requested help with U.S. university and/or program accreditation in order to compete professionally as world-class institutions of higher education.

The site visits revealed an impressive array of examples of how these modest university partnerships are achieving MEPI goals and addressing the key components of excellence in education. All the partnerships, to some degree, demonstrated how Arab women are an integral part of the activities in the institutions in this study. Of the twelve institutions in the sample, six were focusing on business, economics, Internet and Communication Technologies; three on teacher education; two on media and journalism; and one on American studies.

Work outside the university, such as consultation on national policy, is the highest level of impact expected from academic partnerships. Evidence of service or extension work, especially in education, often requires time to become apparent. Yet, affect on policy is beginning to happen. In one partnership, for example, a representative of the Ministry of Education was working side by side with faculty in the College of Education to implement the service-learning component of teacher education for future teachers of English. The Ministry representative said that if this teaching method works to improve the training of English teachers, the Ministry will consider promoting the pedagogy across other disciplines.

Examples of sustainability for these short-term partnerships once MEPI funding has ended, included continuing agreements or plans for continuing agreements between partner institutions for faculty and student visits, program exchanges, collaborative research, conference presentations, and joint publications. One partner described a plan to leverage the MEPI partnership to acquire additional funds and equipment from international donors for its new Women's Center. Some partners reported that HCN students were being offered on-going opportunities for graduate study such as a continuation of a MEPI Master's degree scholarship for doctoral studies. Several partnerships have found that access to video conferencing equipment is a low-cost way to encourage faculty and students to remain in-touch.

Participants were in agreement about "the characteristics of a successful partnership." Responses included: mutual respect and perceived benefits; continuous, on-going communications; good planning in the beginning to get activities launched in the right direction; equality among partners especially in the use of funds; careful identification of participants who are dedicated, interested, and committed; a sense of cultural flexibility; openness to change; flexibility to changes in country needs and Ministry requirements; and a commitment to sustainability.

Nearly all partnerships mentioned that a major lesson learned was not allowing enough time for planning travel and VISA processing for study in the USA. “Lessons Learned” reflected issues raised round “characteristics of successful partnerships.” Partners mentioned they had learned the value of good pre-activity planning, and that on-going communications among participants was crucial for success. Other findings included the value of needs assessments to determine appropriate starting points. Careful promises of travel seemed to be extremely important so that trips to the U.S. not exceed what the budget could realistically support. Partners reported that new degree programs at HCN campuses rarely get off the ground in one or two years. More time is required, tuition costs can be an inhibiting factor, and higher education bureaucracies are slow to change.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The U.S. system of higher education is highly regarded as a model in many MEPI countries. HCN university administrators and faculty are eager to incorporate into their higher education structures many of the U.S. methods and processes for teaching, conducting research, and promoting public service. This assessment found that administrators and faculty were enthusiastic about incorporating changes that would strengthen human and institutional capacity building while addressing MEPI goals.

The site visits demonstrated to the assessment team that if MEPI university partnerships were available for longer time periods, the program could move from the level of mutual exchanges to one of mutual programmatic collaboration focused on sustainable impact. Longer, better funded, partnerships make it possible for institutions to engage in more complex research, plan quality publications, practice good teaching methods, and engage in public-private sector projects that result in sustainable reform within the higher education system.

MEPI partnerships clearly provide unpretentious opportunities for positive public diplomacy both at home and abroad especially since the partnerships appear to be doing what partnerships are designed to do: provide value to both sets of partners. This assessment found unexpected benefits to the U.S. campuses in terms of strengthening culture and language studies, helping faculty find creative ways to explore international topics, and stimulating students to think about globalization issues particularly in relation to the Middle East and North Africa. Simultaneously, positive academic benefits are occurring on HCN campuses and for HCN academics studying at U.S. universities.

In addition to finding measurable evidence of impact related to MEPI goals, the assessment also identified ways to improve partnerships. Two key recommendations for future partnerships are more clearly defined agreements and required orientation briefings. Both HCN and U.S. partners shared specific suggestions for cooperative planning and program implementation to ensure sustainability.

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STUDY DESIGN

Background – Middle East Partnership Initiative

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is a Presidential Initiative created in 2002, to support reform in the Middle East and is directed by the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. Funded by the U.S. Congress, MEPI supported more than 350 programs in 15 countries in the Middle East during its first three years of operation. MEPI programs fall under four discipline areas or “pillars” that complement each other: (1) political governance and participation (2) economic liberalization and opportunity (3) educational quality and access (4) the empowerment of women.

The U.S.-Middle East Partnerships Program funded under an agreement between MEPI, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supports U.S. universities in partnership with Arab colleges and universities that are working to bring about structural and institutional reform. These partnerships are designed to improve the quality of instruction, research, and materials, and share best practices as higher education seeks to equip students with the skills to operate in the global economy.

Implemented in cooperation with Higher Education for Development (HED), the MEPI university partnership program awarded 17 grants for partnerships in 12 Middle Eastern countries between 2003 and 2005, and four more grants in 2006, for a total of 21 grants worth over three million dollars in 13 countries.¹ With university cost share added to the grants, the total award value has exceed 5.6 million dollars.

Higher Education for Development is a non-governmental partner organization representing the U.S. higher education community through six higher education associations² and their constituencies. It receives funding from USAID’s Office of Education under a cooperative agreement between USAID and the American Council on Education.

¹ Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and West Bank and Gaza.

² American Council on Education, American Association of Community Colleges, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Association of American Universities, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, National Association of State Universities and land-Grant Colleges

In July 2003, HED organized the first open competition for partnership awards under the U.S.-Middle East University Partnerships Program. U.S. university applicants were asked to design programs in collaboration with their host country colleagues to:

- a) Improve the quality of faculty instruction, independent student research and materials available at Arab universities;
- b) Enhance Arab universities' administrative and managerial capacity;
- c) Expand partnerships between U.S. and Arab universities and their economic and civil society partners; and
- d) Increase private sector employment of university graduates.

The applications also were expected to include some or all of the MEPI education pillar's six key components of excellence in education: (1) curriculum development (2) standards, assessment, and certification (3) teacher training and certification (4) administration--management and leadership (5) community participation and private sector support (6) technology utilization.

In addition, the applicants were requested to focus on one or more disciplines. Between 2003 and 2006 those disciplines included: business administration and economics; information and communications technologies; American studies; media and journalism; teacher education; gender studies; and government and legal studies.

Purpose of the MEPI Partnership Assessment

During the fall of 2006, three years after the first MEPI university partnerships were announced, USAID and HED implemented an internal assessment of a sample of twelve partnerships as one way to determine evidence of impact from program activities. Since partnership implies a joint relationship between a U.S. institution and a host country national (HCN) institution, it was further assumed there would be evidence of capacity building for the U.S. partners as well. Therefore, It was agreed that the assessment would focus on evidence of impact of:

- MEPI university partnerships to strengthen the capacity of HCN faculty and institutions to deliver quality higher education;
- HCN higher education faculty and institutions' contribution to MEPI goals and/or local development goals;
- sustainability of university partnership capacity building; and,
- partnership activity on U.S. faculty, students, and institutions.³

Assessment team members were reminded that all university partnerships are quite modest ranging from \$100,000 to \$300,000 (83% of the twelve awards in this sample are for \$100,000). Likewise, the partnerships are funded for a period of only two to three years. Given the short time frames and modest funding levels, evidence of expected impact must be realistic.

Methods

Implementing the internal assessment process required planners to:

- first, determine what information was needed to focus the assessment on evidence of impact,
- second, establish the sources of that information, and
- third, decide the most prudent methods for gathering information. See Table 1.

Major sources of information included:

- *secondary data* from grant applications, agreements between U.S. institutions and the American Council on Education (ACE), progress reports, and conference reports;
- *structured telephone interviews* with project managers representing the U.S. partners; and
- *site visit interviews* with HCN partners at their institutions of higher education.

When reviewing written documents, planners looked for evidence of higher education partnership influence on:

- human capacity building as defined by USAID,⁴
- institutional capacity strengthening as defined by USAID,⁵
- contributions to MEPI discipline areas and/or local development goals, and
- national policy, NGO support, and public service outside the university.

Similarly, interview questions for both U.S. partners and HCN participants focused on:

- human capacity building for both U.S. and HCN participants,
- institutional capacity strengthening, for both U.S. and HCN institutions,
- contributions to local development goals, e.g., goals related to the MEPI pillars, and
- service outside the university including policy advising.

⁴USAID: Defined as education and training for individuals to (a) broaden and increase individual access and completion of education, or (b) specialized proficiency opportunities (long and short-term degrees, exchanges, study tours, technical training at home and abroad) relevant to their country's development.

⁵ USAID: Strengthening is measured as an improvement in the organizational components or operational aspects of higher education institutions that enable the institution to better contribute to host country development. Includes strengthened faculty departments, improved analytical and research capacity, increased university outreach, improved financial management, increased capacity of teacher training institutions especially to fill gaps caused by HIV/AIDS, and improved application of technology to host country needs.

**Table 1. Proposed Plan of Operation for MEPI University Partnership Assessments –
USAID & HED Fall 2006**

What We Want to Know	How We Might Find Out			What We Expect to Find
	Secondary Information	Surveys - Interviews	Observations	Expected Outcomes - Results
Review purpose, expected activities, outcomes: goals for partnership human and institutional capacity building	Original application; sub-agreement			Objectives for Partnership work Planned activities, outcomes
Objectives – activities and outcomes and results	Summarize reports from files; Report for Annual Synergy Conference			Expected Outcomes
Expected Impact	Synergy Conference Summary			Expected impact
Reported Recent Success Stories	Synergy Conference; Semi-annual reports			Outcomes
Review partnership purpose, outcomes results with US partner; focus on evidence of capacity building		Phone survey with U.S. participants		Review outcomes Expected impact of partnership to HCN institution and to U.S. institution
Review partnership benefits to local U.S. higher education community		Phone survey with U.S. participants		Outcomes and impact to USA institution; results
Review partnership benefits to local U.S. NGO community (outside university)		Phone survey with U.S. participants		Outcomes and impact to larger USA community;
Confirm evidence of HCN human capacity building outcomes		Interviews with HCN recipients	Visit to HCN institution	Outcomes and impact to HCN staff and faculty of higher education institutions
Confirm evidence of HCN institutional capacity building outcomes		Interviews with HE HCN recipients	Visit to HCN institution	Outcomes and impact to HCN institution of higher education
Look for evidence of HCN partnership outcomes outside HE institution		Interviews with appropriate HCN participants	Visits to ministries, NGOs, government entities	Outcomes and impact to HCN community outside higher education institutions
Include any serendipitous findings, results related to partnership objectives; overall MEPI purpose				Unexpected Outcomes and Impact to both USA and HCN faculty, staff, students institutions; affects on development policy and goals
Other, i.e., characteristics of good partnerships; management issues				Recommendations for making MEPI higher education program better

List of Partnership Sites to Visit: Bahrain & Oman; Egypt & Jordan; Tunisia & Morocco

Visiting Teams: three teams, each team travels to two countries

Dates: In consultation with Missions and Posts

Planning details with: USAID, Department of State, Missions, Posts

Stage of partnership at each site: Beginning, middle, end, closed out (will affect how questions are asked)

Selection of Partnerships for the Assessment

The assessment team had sufficient resources to review partnerships in six countries. Partnerships were selected for the study based on geographic location, discipline representation, and stage of completion. HED staff, in consultation with USAID Officers and Department of State MEPI Managers, determined that partnerships in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Oman, and Bahrain be included with two each in Bahrain and Oman, one each in Jordan and Morocco, and three each in Tunisia and Egypt. Table 2. describes partnership objectives in each country. Figure 1. shows locations of the partnerships.

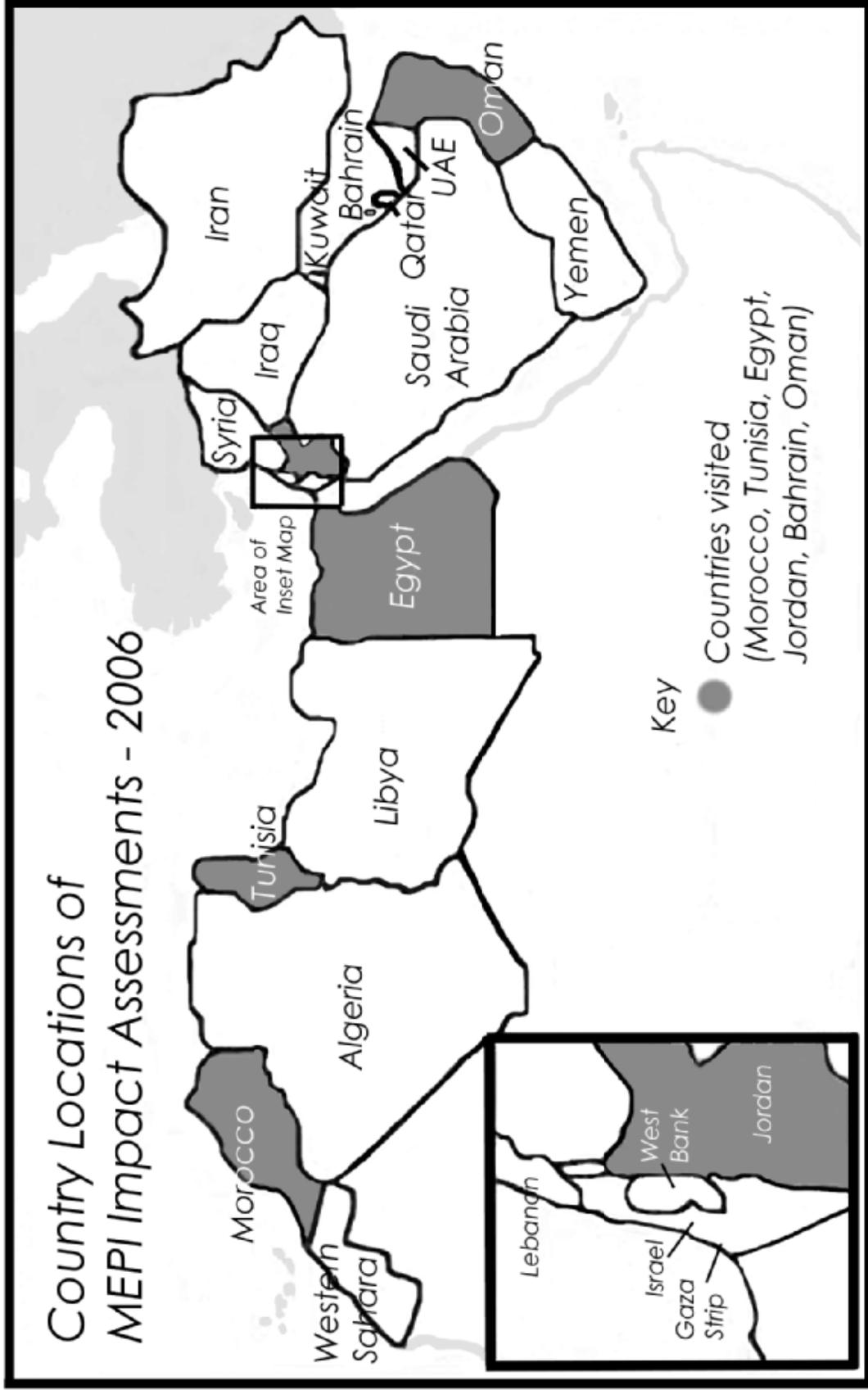
A cross-section of American universities are represented in the sample including two private universities—DePaul University, Southern Methodist University—and nine public universities of varying sizes—Murray State University, University of Connecticut, Colorado State University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Montana State University, University of Missouri at Rolla, Northern Kentucky University, Bowling Green State University, and the University of Arkansas.

Table 2. Selected Partnership Information for the Assessment

Country	HCN Institutions	US Institutions	Start Date	End Date	Discipline
Bahrain	University of Bahrain	DePaul University	11/4/2003	12/31/04	Media & Journalism
	University of Bahrain	Murray State University	12/15/2003	9/30/06	Education
Egypt	Ain Shams University	University of Connecticut	11/24/2003	5/31/06	ICT* & Business
	Helwan University/AAST	Colorado State University	11/16/2004	9/30/07	Business & Economics
	Menoufia University	University of Connecticut	1/26/2006	9/30/08	Education
Jordan	University of Jordan	University of N. Carolina – Chapel Hill	3/23/2004	9/30/06	American Studies
Morocco	Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane	Montana State University	12/17/2004	6/30/07	ICT
Oman	Mazoon College	University of Missouri, Rolla	12/15/2003	9/30/05	Business & Economics
	Sultan Qaboos University	Northern Kentucky University	1/31/2006	9/30/08	Education
Tunisia	Institut de Presse et des Sciences de l'Information	Bowling Green State University	1/11/2005	9/30/06	Media & Journalism
	Université du Monastir & Université du Sousse	University of Arkansas	12/2/2003	6/30/06	Business & Economics
	University of Tunis el Manar	Southern Methodist University	11/20/2003	7/31/06	ICT

* ICT = Information and Communication Technologies

Figure 1. Country Locations of Partnerships in the Assessment



Partnership Objectives and Discipline Areas

Goals and objectives for the 12 university partnerships selected for the assessment are outlined in Table 3. The objectives have been summarized from the partnership agreements. All partnerships, to some extent, include elements of the four MEPI pillars.

Table 3. Partnership Objectives and Discipline Areas

Country	Lead U.S. Institution	Lead Overseas Institution	Partnership Objectives	Area
Bahrain	DePaul University	University of Bahrain	To enhance the university's journalism program.	Media and Journalism
	Murray State University	University of Bahrain	To undertake an English language teacher training initiative.	Education
Egypt	Colorado State University	Helwan University	To enhance the quality of instruction in Construction Management through online learning, research and hands-on experiences for students at both Universities.	Business Admin. & Economics
	University of Connecticut	Ain Shams University	To develop a cross-disciplinary Master's program in information technology and entrepreneurship to lead the IT Industry in Egypt.	ICT
	University of Connecticut	Menoufia University	To develop a program of faculty exchanges and training focused on women in development to build capacity to conduct research on women's social, political & economic issues to benefit community-non-governmental organizations.	Gender Studies
Jordan	University of North Carolina	University of Jordan	To strengthen the M.A. Program in American Studies through curriculum development, faculty exchanges, and linkages with a global network of American Studies Programs.	American Studies
Morocco	Montana State University	Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane	To create a reliable stream of ICT Ph.D. graduates to supply Morocco with academic and industry professionals.	ICT
Oman	University of Missouri-Rolla	Mazoon College	To collaborate on a joint initiative on business innovation and entrepreneurship for female students.	Business and Economics
Tunisia	Bowling Green State University	Institut de Presse et des Sciences de l'Information	To create core curriculum revisions in Journalism focusing on international and democratic media.	Media and Journalism
	Southern Methodist University	Université de Tunis el Manar	To reduce Tunisia's shortage of qualified faculty members in computer science.	ICT
	University of Arkansas	Université du Monastir and Université de Sousse	To develop and deliver executive education programs and undertake revisions to incorporate entrepreneurship into the undergraduate core curriculum	Business and Economics
Oman	Northern Kentucky University	Sultan Qaboos University	To improve English As a Second Language (ESL) training by impacting K-12 learning, strengthening teaching strategies, and linking ESL teaching to community needs.	Teacher Education

FINDINGS

Partnership Cycles

It was important to keep in mind when summarizing evidence of impact from the partnership reviews that length of time the partnerships had been operating would affect results. Two partnerships were new or had recently started, two others were in the middle of three year work plans, and the remaining eight had completed activities under their formal agreements, five as recently as 2006.

Secondary Information: University Agreements, Progress Reports, and HED 2006 Synergy Conference Materials

Once the partnerships were identified, the agreements between U.S. institutions and the American Council on Education were reviewed to determine what the partners expected to achieve. Progress reports were analyzed to assess what had been accomplished to-date. And, the 2006 HED Synergy Conference “pre-conference questions” were examined to clarify what further outcomes or results partners anticipated. The agreements and progress reports were summarized into partnership briefs as one way to prepare site visitors with background information about program goals and objectives.

Evidence of Human Capacity Strengthening

The progress reports, in particular, demonstrate that human capacity building is occurring as a result of partnership activities. Reports show that as a consequence of these twelve MEPI partnerships, 380 HCN individuals have participated in non-degree training, exchanges, and internships; 35 individuals have earned degrees in the form of certificates, bachelors, masters or doctorates as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Evidence of Host Country *Human Capacity Building*

Progress reports for the 12 MEPI Partnerships selected for this study show:	
380 individuals have participated in non-degree training, exchanges, and internships.	35 individuals have received degrees, i.e. Certificates, BS, MS, PhD

Evidence of Institutional Capacity Building

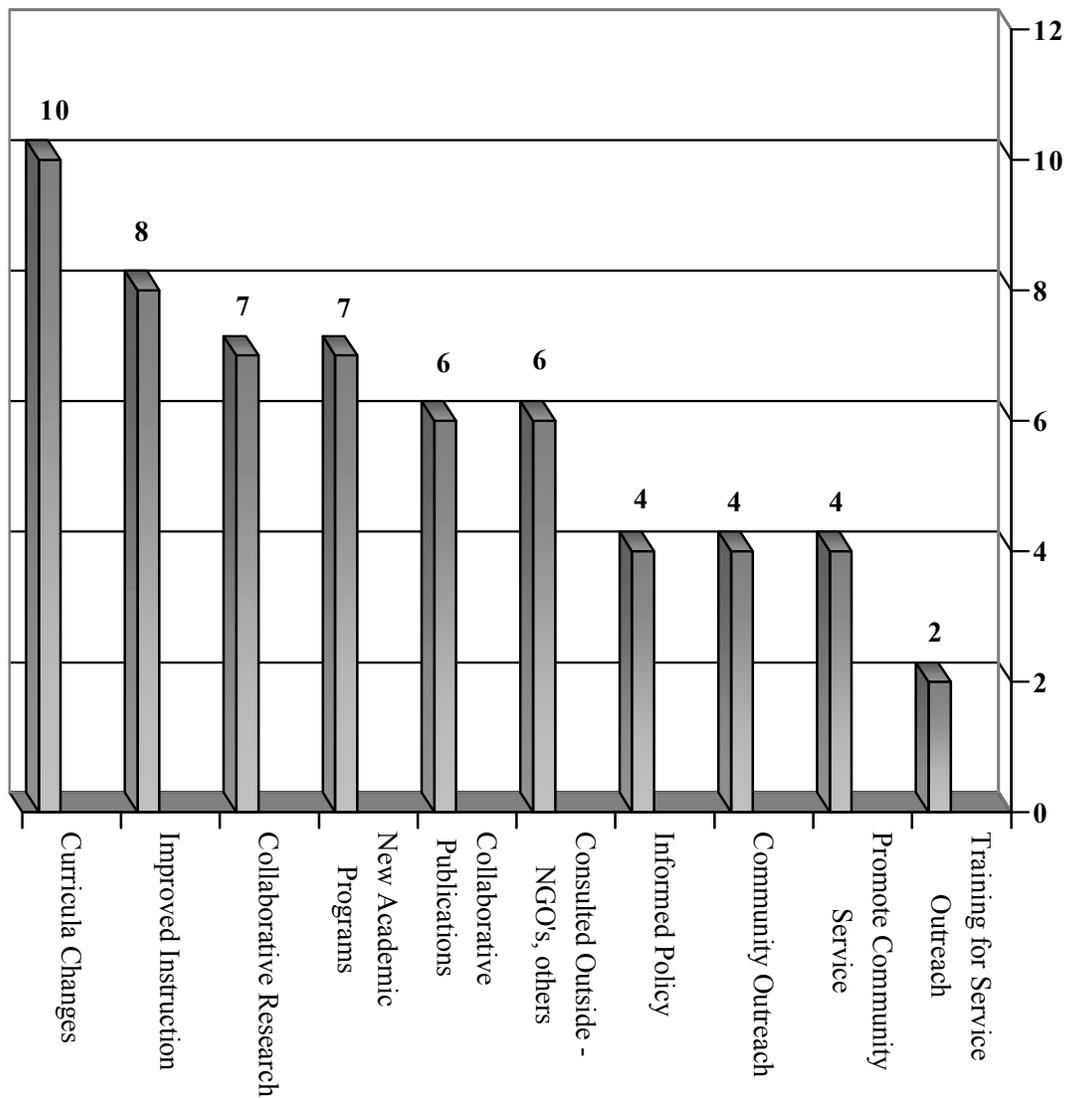
Similarly, the progress reports demonstrate institutional capacity strengthening. Table 5 describes how these twelve partnerships are affecting the internal operations of the HCN institutions in terms of curricula, teaching methods, new academic programs, research, publications, service outside the institution, and support for national policy. As a result of partnership work, changes to the curricula were reported by 83 percent of HCN partners; 67 percent said improved teaching methods were being employed; 58 percent reported new academic programs and collaborative research; 50 percent said they had prepared new publications; and 34 percent described involvement of service outside the institution that included consultation on national policy.

Table 6 describes responses to the HED 2006 Synergy Conference “pre-conference questions” from six of the twelve partnerships in the sample, those still *active* during the summer of 2006. Of particular interest from this survey are responses to “predicted or expected” impact as a result of partnership activities. As a result of these answers, those planning the site visits, had some information as to what evidence of impact might be available, at least for fifty percent of the partnerships. The “predicted impact” responses suggested that partnerships were expecting to have some:

- affect on faculty skills to teach and do research,
- influence on curricula,
- affect on academic opportunities for women, and
- influence on faculty and student cross-cultural activities at both the U.S. and HCN institutions.

Table 5. Evidence of Host Country *Institutional Capacity Building*

The 12 host country national partners reported the following activities at their institutions.



Since all secondary information was taken from self-reported documents, it was important to validate progress and outcomes with both U.S. and HCN partners. The background briefs helped to focus on the key elements of each partnership in preparation for follow-up telephone interviews. The summarized information also prepared HED and USAID staff members for site visits with HCN partners. U.S. partners were contacted through telephone interviews, and HCN partners were interviewed during site visits.

Table 6. Secondary Information from the HED 2006 Synergy Conference

Responses to 2006 Pre-Synergy Conference Questions about “predicted impact” of partnerships

Country	University Partner	Success Stories/Lessons Learned Notes	Predicted Impact Of Partnership
Tunisia	University of Arkansas	NR*	NR
	Southern Methodist	Excellent human capacity building for both U.S. and HCN graduate students	For ICT there will be a cadre of well trained faculty who can mentor and train other faculty; on-going faculty collaboration in research; on-going collaboration between U.S. and HCN faculty long after partnership ends
	Bowling Green	2 graduate fellowships producing unexpected evidence of human capacity building	Evidence of a more positive world view from both U.S. and HCN students; more PhDs and master’s completed; more U.S. institutional departments now involved in HCN institutions of higher education
Morocco	Montana State University	Increased rigor of applied research capability; greater institutional capacity	New doctorate program established in the Moroccan context; education model transferable to other institutions in North Africa and Middle East to form graduate education studies in computer sciences.
Bahrain	DePaul University	NR	NR
	Murray State University	Stronger human capacity as a result of training English teachers; Murray State so affected by this partnership that its own campus now offers courses in Arabic	NR
Oman	University of Missouri, Rolla	NR	NR
	Northern Kentucky	Stronger institutional capacity; service learning sites being developed as part of methods for teaching English	More local teachers will have experienced service learning; highly qualified EFL teacher educators as a result of this partnership
Jordan	University of North Carolina	NR	NR
Egypt	Colorado State	Exposure to principles and practice of construction industry in Egypt and the U.S. Increased familiarity of students with international perspectives.	Stronger partnership with Ministry of Education; additional, on-going partnerships between HCN and U.S. institutions of higher education
	University of Connecticut	NR	NR
	University of Connecticut	NR	NR

* No Response

Telephone Interviews with U.S. Partners

Two months before the site visits, each of the twelve U.S. partnership managers was asked a series of structured questions through a telephone interview. On average the interviews lasted one hour and covered the following questions:

- Describe evidence of institutional capacity building at HCN institutions;
- Describe evidence of human capacity strengthening with HCN faculty and staff;
- Describe work toward MEPI/U.S. Government development goals in country;
- Describe benefits from the partnership to the U.S. higher education institution;
- What could have gone better with this partnership.

Human and Institutional Strengthening for Host Country Institutions

During the phone interviews, U.S. partnership managers were able to list numerous examples of evidence of both human and institutional capacity building at their partner institutions. In addition, they were eager to share examples of how the work was supporting, either directly or indirectly, the MEPI goals of democracy building, economic growth, education reform, and empowerment of women. In countries with USAID Missions, they often added examples of how the MEPI partnerships were supporting local government development goals, particularly when local academics had an opportunity to affect policy and support non-government agencies (NGOs).

How to Improve Partnerships

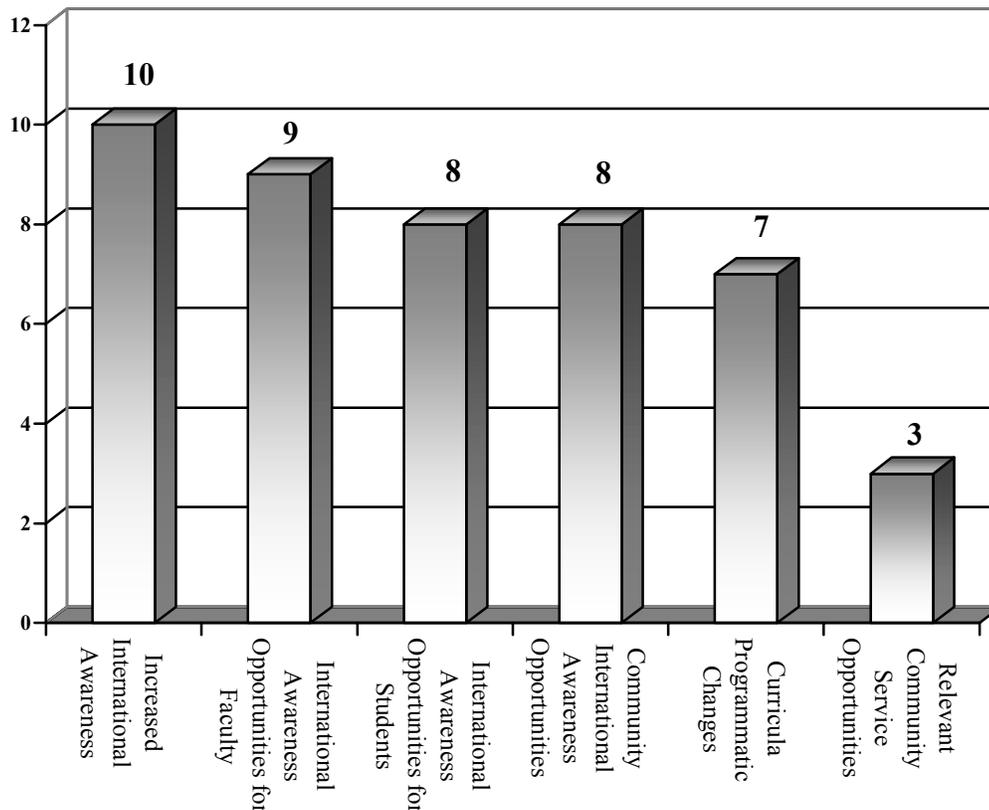
The interviews also provided an opportunity to share specifics about what went well and what could have gone even better. Visa difficulties were often mentioned as unplanned irritations. Cultural and social misunderstandings sometimes slowed start up activities, yet, respondents were often proud to explain how they worked out subtle cultural nuisances and offered suggestions for briefing future partnership managers.

Institutional Strengthening for U.S. Colleges and Universities

The telephone interviews revealed interesting and varied benefits for U.S. universities as a result of the MEPI university partnerships that had not been captured in earlier progress reports.

Project managers discussed in detail the value of having Arab faculty and students, especially women, visit their campuses, live in their communities, and share their culture. They mentioned the importance of having native Arabic speakers at campuses that are offering Arabic studies or are starting Arabic language majors. Conversely, they described the academic value of having American faculty and students visit HCN campuses in the Middle East and North Africa. They went on to describe lasting professional friendships that have developed among faculty and students around specific topics of research and planned publications. Table 7. shows the number of U.S. partners reporting institutional benefits to their campuses as a result of involvement in the MEPI university partnerships.

Table 7. Evidence of U.S. Institutional Capacity Building
Number of U.S. partners reporting MEPI partnership benefits at their institutions



More specifically, ten of the twelve U.S. partners mentioned that the partnerships had increased international awareness on their campuses, especially in terms of helping faculty learn about international opportunities. They added that the partnerships promoted international awareness for students, and exposed the greater campus community to issues related to globalization. Seven interviewees said the partnership experience had influenced, in some ways, changes in academic programs or curricula.

Site Visits

During November and December 2006, and January 2007, three teams of two or three members visited MEPI university partnerships in six countries, each team traveled to two countries.

November	Marilyn Crane (HED) and Gary Bittner (USAID)	Morocco and Tunisia
December	Jane Gore, (HED) and Martin Hewitt (USAID)	Oman and Bahrain
January	Christine Morfit and Lisa Highland (HED) and Mei Mei Peng (USAID)	Egypt and Jordan

The purpose of the site visits was to meet with HCN partners, visit their institutions, and speak with recipients of partnership activities. The site visits included meetings with U.S. Government representatives—USAID officers and/or MEPI managers to review program objectives, outcomes, and impacts.

A wealth of information was obtained from the site visits. Much of the reported capacity building information summarized from written documents and confirmed through the telephone interviews was not only substantiated, but also elaborated on during the site visits. Additional benefits, not readily apparent from earlier information, was observed during the visits, e.g., one partnership was leveraging partnership activities to secure additional funding from international donors for a women’s center. Specific examples were noted for improving the partnerships and expanding the impact of the activities.

Evidence of Impact of Human Capacity Building

Human capacity building is occurring at all partnership sites. Faculty and staff are benefiting from:

- long-term training that culminate in graduate degrees, and
- short-term participation in seminars, workshops, and exchanges both at home and abroad.

A summary of progress reports show that 380 individuals have participated in non- degree training, exchanges, seminars, workshops, and internships, and another 35 individuals have received degrees including formal certificates, bachelors, masters, or doctorates as a result of the twelve partnerships. In addition, some faculty members are participating in cooperative research projects with partner universities, others are preparing presentations for professional conferences, and still others are writing articles for academic journals in collaboration with their new colleagues from the partnership institutions.

Faculty described examples of new teaching methods they had learned as a result of their classes and visits to U.S. universities, and how they are sharing those skills at their home campuses. For example, the concept of “train-the-trainer” (TOT) is now being used at some HCN campuses. Faculty members reported using the TOT method to share improved teaching methods with colleagues and graduate students. A second prominent teaching approach includes the learning of English as part of subject matter classes. English capability is enhanced when the students practice in English what they are learning, for example, discussion of the concepts of business development in English. Graduate students reported benefits from partnership distance learning experiences through the web and Internet, especially as ways of keeping apprised of the most up-to-date subject matter. “Active learning” and “participatory learning” were mentioned as new teaching methods being introduced at partnership institutions.

Evidence of Impact of Institutional Capacity Building

The most frequently mentioned institutional changes as a result of the MEPI partnerships were curricula revisions, course adjustments, interdisciplinary diploma programs, and the introduction of new programs or majors. Four partnerships demonstrated how they were introducing multi-

media approaches to teach ICT/business classes, to practice learning English as second language, and to produce media news and journalism stories.

Partnership institutions reported including more emphasis on women's issues in their curricula and courses. One institution had introduced an outside advisory board to the university decision-making process as a way to encourage faculty and staff to work more directly with the private and business sectors. As a result of these improved methods and up-to-date curricula, faculty and staff from two universities inquired about securing program accreditation for their colleges and programs in order to compete professionally as world-class institutions of higher education.

Evidence of Impact – MEPI Reforms

The site visits revealed an impressive array of examples of how these modest university partnerships are achieving MEPI goals and addressing the key components of excellence in education. Of the 12 partnerships visited, six were focusing on business, economics, Internet and communication technologies; three on teacher education; two on media and journalism; and one on American studies. Including women and gender issues in courses of study is typically something twenty-first century U.S. colleges and universities do well and are persistent about incorporating. All the partnerships visited in this study were able to demonstrate how women were an integral part of the activities in these Arab institutions where women traditionally have had fewer opportunities.

The primary partnership focus in countries where learning English is a high priority, is about improving the methods for teaching English. These partnerships are concentrating on the MEPI education-reform pillar by promoting active learning pedagogy to improve the speaking and writing of English, and the education of English teachers. Evidence of participatory teaching and learning of English was particularly evident through activities such as service learning, community service, and distance learning.

The team found that the six partnerships focusing on business and economics were often concentrating on women in business as ways to promote women's employment skills and support women's empowerment. Civil society and democracy training were evident throughout

the partnership activities. For example, active learning can promote personal responsibility and equitable treatment in the classroom. Knowledge about human rights was part of the American studies classes as well as components of the journalism and media workshops and courses, and in business development seminars.

Evidence of Impact -- Policy

Affect on national policy is the highest level of impact expected as part of the partnerships. Evidence of this result, especially in education, often requires time to become apparent. Yet, affect on policy was beginning to happen. In Oman, for example, a representative of the Ministry of Education was working side by side with faculty in the College of Education to implement the service-learning component of teacher education for future teachers of English. The Ministry representative told the MEPI visiting team that if this teaching method works as a way to improve the training of English teachers, the Ministry would be willing to promote the pedagogy across other disciplines.

Evidence of Impact – Sustainability

The most impressive evidence of sustainability once the MEPI funding ended was continuing agreements, or the planning of continuing agreements, between partner institutions for faculty and student exchanges, program visits, collaborative research, conference presentations, and joint publications. Other evidence included HCN institutions developing new working agreements with other U.S. universities where the discipline support was more appropriate or stronger. One partner described intent to leverage the MEPI partnership to acquire additional funds and equipment from international donors for its Women’s Center. Some partners reported that HCN students were being offered on-going opportunities for graduate study such as a MEPI Master’s degree scholarship being continued for doctoral studies.

At some host country institutions, faculty reported that successful curricula changes and new degree programs will be replicated at neighboring universities expanding the effects of important institutional changes. Most respondents were able to describe a “wish list” of additional partnership exchange activities they would utilize if resources were available and the partnerships were extended. Examples of continuing activities were: help with public-private

partnerships, assistance with accreditation applications, and provision for on-going academic seminars.

Several partnerships have found that access to video conferencing equipment is a low-cost way to encourage faculty and students to remain in-touch once the MEPI grant ends. Cooperative research studies and journal articles are rarely completed during the short MEPI grant period and provide professional motivation for faculty colleagues to continue collaborative work.

On the less positive side, several HCN faculty and students said they had been promised follow up classes or travel to the U.S. or Internet connectivity or library resources that never materialized. These partners found their expectations unmet or not clearly implemented.

Characteristics of Successful Partnerships

The question about “what are the characteristics of a successful partnership” evoked similar answers from all participants. Responses included: mutual respect; continuous on-going communications; planning, planning, and more planning particularly in the beginning to get the activities launched in the right direction; equality among partners especially so that travel funds are shared equally between institutions; careful identification of participants who are dedicated, interested, and committed; a sense of cultural flexibility; openness to change especially in the local academic community; flexibility to changes in country needs and for Ministry requirements; and a commitment to sustainability. Respondents also concluded that both partners must perceive mutual benefits from the activities for long-term sustainability to occur.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Nearly all partnerships mentioned not allowing enough time for planning travel and VISA processing when study in the USA was a component of the partnership. Sometimes planning for women students and faculty to travel required additional attention to detail, but partners said these issues were not insurmountable. More and longer travel to the U.S. was mentioned as a need especially for American studies programs. “Lessons Learned” from the site visits, in some ways, reflected issues raised round “characteristics of successful partnerships.” For example,

partners mentioned they had learned the value of good pre-activity planning, and that on-going communications among participants was crucial to success.

Other findings included the value of needs assessments to determine appropriate starting points. One such example was an assessment of English comprehension so that classes conducted by U.S. visiting faculty could be delivered at a meaningful level of understanding and/or planning for simultaneous translation. Another example of value from a needs assessment involved guidance to focus objectives at an appropriate level to avoid setting up expectations that could not be met by the partnerships' limited resources of time and money. Careful promises of travel seemed to be extremely important so that trips to the U.S. for both students and faculty not exceed what the budget could realistically support. Pre-activity needs assessments often help anchor activities in the reality of the local economy, and social, and cultural settings to insure that desired outcomes are met.

Partners also reported that when establishing new degree programs at HCN campuses, it was important to remember that these programs rarely get off the ground in one or two years. More time is required, tuition costs can be an inhibiting factor, and bureaucracies are slow to change. Partners noted that some of these institutional changes could be enhanced with the aid of outside private sector contributions, but require time to cultivate and implement.

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>a) This assessment collected quantitative and qualitative evidence that the Middle East Partnership Initiative is meeting its original program goals. Program outcomes and results are positive. Capacity building is occurring and MEPI goals are being addressed, but sustainable reform in higher education happens slowly.</p>	<p>a) MEPI university partnerships should maintain the current model of high-value institution-to-institution, faculty-to-faculty, student-to-student interactions that promote trust, professional respect, benefits, stimulation, and collegiality; longer time arrangements, however, are preferable for sustainable impact.</p>
<p>b) MEPI university partnerships should offer greater opportunities for continued academic collaboration related to international research topics, publications focusing on issues of globalization, expanded university extension work and public service to help academics advise outside the university.</p>	<p>b) More awards for larger amounts of funding and longer time frames would enhance or expand the impact of university partnerships on HCN universities, and would have a greater affect on MEPI discipline areas (pillars); i.e., more time for universities to develop public-private partnerships; formalize WID/GAD topics into the curriculum; practice sound teaching methods. And, more time for increased impact of public diplomacy on both HCN and U.S. campuses.</p>
<p>c) Given the reforms already underway in Middle East universities, MEPI university partnerships should be more than student-faculty exchanges; for example, greater focus on helping universities become world-class institutions.</p>	<p>c) HCN institutions need more support for replication of reform efforts to other universities in country for impact to be maximized and sustained. HCN institutions request assistance with accreditation issues, e.g., provide assistance to HCN institutions to meet U.S. accreditation standards.</p>
<p>d) The assessment found unexpected positive program impact on American campuses such as support for Arabic language teaching, community awareness about Arab cultures and Muslim religions; overall the partnerships offer high-value cross-cultural benefits in the United States</p>	<p>d) Continuation of MEPI university partnerships as a way to provide cost-effective positive public diplomacy on U.S. campuses as well as at HCN institutions.</p>
<p>e) Given the slow beginnings of some partnerships there might be a need for mentoring, e.g., from a “MEPI Alumni Association.”</p>	<p>e) MEPI university partnerships must include orientations and cultural briefings for new partnership managers.</p>
<p>f) Clear agreements between the participating U.S. university, American Council on Education, and HCN institution promote transparency for specific partnership benefits, e.g., equitable allocation and expenditure of award funds.</p>	<p>f) Partnership agreements must contain: program goals that can be tracked and monitored; clear objectives with specific activities and expected outcomes that reflect the use of shared resources; and plans for long-term sustainability.</p>



TEACHING ENGLISH WITH A PURPOSE

A partnership between Sultan Qaboos University, Oman – Northern Kentucky University, USA

Implementing service learning as part of the curriculum for university students studying to become primary and secondary school English teachers is a brand new concept in Oman on the Persian Gulf. As a result of a higher education partnership, begun in 2006, with Northern Kentucky University and funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), sixty Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) students volunteered to add community service components to the course work that prepares them to become English teachers. These outside-the-classroom-activities require the students to use English in their community service projects.



Dr. Salha Issan, Dean of the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman reviewing student projects.



An education student at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).

“This innovative curricula change offers our students multiple benefits,” reports Dr. Salha Issan, Dean of the College of Education at SQU. “Our students desperately need opportunities to practice English, especially those who plan to be English teachers.” “At the same time, Omani students are now beginning to experience the rewards and benefits of well planned public service activities, a new concept for our culture.” “The expected long term value of this innovative teaching method is to show future English teachers how to incorporate service-learning into their own classroom teaching when they become secondary teachers in the near future,” adds Dr. Thuwayba Al-Barwani, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at SQU.

Dr. Thuwayba goes on to say that faculty members are thrilled so many students have volunteered for the public service project even though it requires a great deal more time as part of their university studies. As an education researcher, Dr. Thuwayba is carefully monitoring these students’ improved English skills as a way to convince other university colleagues that service learning really benefits their education.



Martin Hewitt, USAID, and education faculty from Sultan Qaboos University



Omani teacher education students at Sultan Qaboos University

Dr. Elaine Jarchow, Dean of the College of Education at Northern Kentucky University, reports that her college became interested in the partnership with SQU because the Kentucky faculty members are convinced that teaching students to become good English teachers can be enhanced with a service-learning component that links English practice with community needs. She goes on to say that American universities are eager to improve pedagogical approaches for teaching future teachers of English, and that service learning often adds relevance to the curriculum. A secondary outcome of this partnership for the U.S. partner is that NKU is now in the process of adding Arabic language study to its university curriculum and contact with SQU gives them access to native-speaking teachers.

This MEPI higher education partnership in Oman is clearly meeting U.S. government development goals to strengthen host country universities' ability to:

- Provide quality teaching,
- Support curricula development, and
- Advise national policy for development.



WOMEN'S CENTER AND GRADUATE DEGREE IN WOMEN'S STUDIES IN TRADITIONALLY RURAL REGION OF EGYPT

A partnership between Menoufia University, Egypt and the University of Connecticut, USA

A new multidisciplinary Master's degree in Women in Development, the first of its kind at Menoufia University, and one of a very few graduate degrees in all of Egypt is being developed as a result of a Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) higher education project between Menoufia University and the University of Connecticut. The graduate degree will be housed in the new Women's Center, which will also offer community outreach, research, workshops and seminars about human rights, women's issues, and business development and management.



The Masters degree in Women in Development will offer programs of study



President Abbas Aly El-Hefnawy, of Menoufia University presents University Seal to Christine Morfit, Executive Director, HED at January, 2007 USAID/HED visit.

During its first year, 2006, the Women's Center has gained support from regional women's councils and NGO's, and has begun offering workshops on topics of particular interest to women. The first such workshop, "Human Rights and Women's Issues in Egypt," expected 50 participants and over 100 attended requiring quick planning for repeat workshops. "The ultimate goal of the Women's Center is to provide women opportunities to become community and regional leaders, to realize their full potential, and to have opportunities to focus on

business development and management to expand their employment possibilities,” said Hanan Hosny Yashan, member of the Faculty leading the creation of the new Center, and Women in Development Master’s degree.

The Women’s Center is clearly delivering education and services outside the university walls. Menoufia faculty and administrators’ passion and commitment for the new Center and degree opportunities are clearly evident since they are taking on the additional work as part of their normal responsibilities with no increase in salaries.

President Abbas Aly El-Hefnawy of Menoufia University is supporting the Women’s Center by allocating prime University space for the offices and classes.



Lisa Highland and Christine Morfit from HED and Dr. Ibrahim Siddik, MEPI Partnership Director, review food science projects as part of a new concentration of study for the Women in Development degree.

The University of Connecticut received a \$200,000 MEPI higher education partnership award in 2005 through a competitive process managed by Higher Education for Development (HED) in collaboration with United States Agency for Development (USAID) to work with Menoufia University to support the local desire to open a Women’s Center in the Menoufia region of Egypt.



LEARNING ABOUT BUSINESS GLOBALIZATION IMPORTANT FOR BOTH PARTNERS

A partnership between University of Sousse, Tunisia and University of Arkansas, USA



(From left to right): Riadh Bouzouache, Faysal Mansouri, Sondes Hamrita, Université of Sousse, Marilyn Crane, HED, Ahmed Noureddine Helal, Université of Sousse, Gary Bittner, USAID, Lotfi Belkacem, Université of Sousse met to discuss sustainability possibilities for the MEPI partnership.

Growing globalization of the worldwide business environment requires that future business leaders understand innovative tactics and practices to manage dynamic organizations. As part of a U.S. Government Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) for higher education, the University of Arkansas has been busy training those future leaders both at home and abroad.

Arkansas, in collaboration with the University of Sousse in Tunisia, developed and delivered two innovative executive education programs to train current and future Tunisian business leaders. These executive education workshops, taught by both Tunisian and American academic partners, were the first for the University of Sousse. As a result, the University of Sousse is now working with the local Chamber of Commerce and local businesses to offer students fieldwork business experiences. These assignments will provide students with practical applications for their education as well as give them access to business incubator centers. The University of Sousse was inspired by its partnership with Arkansas to create student investment clubs and student incubator competition in cooperation with corporate sponsors.



Université of Sousse students and faculty engaged in executive education training provided by Walton College of Business.

These activities expect to give students invaluable, hands-on experience with the creation and management of enterprises in today's global economy.

According to Dr. Joseph Ziegler, Professor and Chair, Department of Economics, Sam M.



(Left) Ahmed Nouredine Helal, President of Universite of Sousse presents University Seal to Gary Bittner, USAID, November 2006.

Walton College of Business, “One great success of this partnership that was largely unanticipated, has been the value of the partnership work not only to Tunisia, but also to the Razorbacks.” “Developing the teaching materials and providing the training required that the Walton College of Business faculty address cross-cultural learning issues that they had rarely considered before.” “These faculty found themselves working through questions that inhibited the adaptation of new courses and teaching methods.” “But, on-going discussions between faculty members from the two partner institutions resulted in better course content

and improved delivery techniques.” “All this recurring collaboration has stimulated interest to develop more joint activities that focus on entrepreneurship in a global economy.” “ In addition, personal and professional relations have emerged between the two universities along with tangible events such as book drives and social networks that will remain long after the grant award has ended.”

During the three-year life of this partnership, three faculty and senior administrators from the University of Sousse visited the University of Arkansas, and seven Arkansas faculty and senior administrators visited the University of Sousse for a total of 23 visits.

Yet, student investment clubs with corporate sponsors and student incubator competitions on the Sousse campus may, in the long run, be the most exciting and unanticipated products of this modestly funded MEPI partnership activity.

ACRONYMS GUIDE

AAST – Arab Academy for Science & Technology	MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
ACE – American Council on Education	MSU (acronym is used for both Montana State University and Murray State University)
AUI – Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane	MU – Menoufia University
B.A. – Bachelors of Arts	NGO – Non-Government Organizations
B.S. – Bachelors of Science	NKU – Northern Kentucky University
BGSU – Bowling Green State University	NR – No Response
CDG – Charles de Gaulle	PAO – Public Affairs Officer
CTO – Cognizant Technical Officer	PhD – Doctor of Philosophy
DITE - Diploma in Information Technology and Entrepreneurship	RFA – Request for Applications
DU – DePaul University	SMU – Southern Methodist University
EFL – English as a Foreign Language	SQU – Sultan Qaboos University
ESL – English as a Second Language	TESOL – Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
FAO – Food & Agricultural Organization	TOT – Training of Trainers
FMES – Faculty of Management & Economic Sciences	UA – University of Arkansas
GOT – Government of Tunisia	UB – University of Bahrain
GSU – Georgia State University	UConn – University of Connecticut
HCN – Host Country National	UJ – University of Jordan
HE – Higher Education	UM – Universite du Monastir
HED – Higher Education for Development	UMR – University of Missouri at Rolla
ICT – Information Communication Technology	UNC – University of North Carolina
IPSI – Institut de Presse et des Sciences de l'Information	UNCH – University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
IT – Information Technology	USAID – United States Agency for International Development
M.A. – Master of Arts	USousse – Université du Sousse
M.S. – Master of Science	UTEM – University of Tunis el Manar
MAVRIT – Middle Atlas Valley Research & Innovation Triangle	Web-CT – Web-Course Tool
MC – Mazoon College	WHO – World Health Organization
MENA – Middle East & North Africa	WID/GAD – Women in Development/Gender and Development
MEPI – Middle East Partnership Initiative	
MO - Missouri	
MOE – Ministry of Education	