

Spotlight on ILA Members

ILA Members are doing amazing leadership work around the world, from starting new degree programs to nurturing young people who make a difference, from running innovative workshops and seminars to fostering organizational change. We are pleased to shine an ILA spotlight on the programs of our members. If you would like to nominate yourself or another ILA institutional member to be featured on these pages, please contact ILA at ila@ila-net.org.

Spotlight on Zayed University :

The New Face of Leadership

The auditorium lights dim, the spotlights go on, and a thousand people leap up to cheer the entrance of some of the most accomplished women



leaders in the world today. A scene from a university in the US? Europe? Maybe South America or Australia? Try Zayed University, in the United Arab

Emirates!

Yes, some big changes are going on in this small country in the heart of the Arabian Gulf—a region commonly perceived in the west as unstable, with conservative views about women. Only 34 years old, the UAE has probably changed more rapidly in the last 20 years than any other country on earth. While much of this change is due to the breakneck speed of construction projects, traditional social roles are shifting quickly as well. About 85 percent of women high school graduates now go on to college, a figure which far outpaces that of men. The country has warmly embraced education and the advancement of women as irreplaceable keys to progress.

Established in 1998, Zayed University is the flagship institution for educational reform and women's leadership development in the UAE. About 2500 students—all UAE

national females—attend the four-year university on campuses in the country's two main cities, Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The curriculum is international and particularly western, as are most faculty.

"Women as Global Leaders: Educating the Next Generation" is Zayed University's entrance onto the international stage. The three-day conference from March 14-16 will draw top women leaders and over 1000 students, educators and leadership practitioners from throughout the world to focus on developing cross-cultural perspectives on leadership education and the empowerment of women.

According to Larry Wilson, the University's Provost, "Teaching and learning at Zayed University is a life-changing experience, both for our students and for our faculty. Where else in the world can one be a part of an educational system that is changing not only a country, but a whole region of the world through opening new horizons to women?"

"I'm happy to be part of something truly historic. Our students will someday be leaders in this country (the UAE) and throughout the region, and this conference provides a great way to build cultural bridges and encourage some really wonderful trends already underway."



Woven throughout the curriculum, leadership development has been a core emphasis of the University since its beginning. Recently, ZU took another step by establishing the Sheikha Fatima Leadership Institute, a university program which hosts targeted training programs, workshops and other events. Liz Faier, formerly of the Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond, began work as Director of the Institute in January of this year.

"I think a lot of people would be surprised at how similar our students are, in some ways, to western college students," notes Faier. "They pull all-nighters, get nervous at job interviews, and download music from the Internet."

"At the same time, they also fast during Ramadan, wear the traditional black abaya, and often they are the first women in their family to learn to read—much less go to a university. It is this combination that makes life

as an educator thoroughly interesting. Our work in women's leadership here at Zayed University offers a fascinating test

case for the field of leadership studies."

For more information on Zayed University, see www.zu.ac.ae.

15.