

Empowering students to be the masters of destiny

American University of Bahrain offers a unique educational journey for students, going beyond classrooms

American University of Bahrain (AUBH) is an educational institution par excellence, which offers an impetus to the Kingdom's great goal to emerge as an education hub of the region. The university is the first comprehensive, purpose-built, American-style university in the Kingdom, which was opened in September 2019. In an exclusive interview with The Daily Tribune, its Founding President Dr Susan E Saxton says that AUBH curriculum focuses on supporting students to discover their true passion while pursuing its dynamic programmes. Excerpts:

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1- What makes your university unique?

We are creating an unprecedented culture of teaching and learning in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It begins with the structure of our programs, and is carried throughout everything we do, from our teaching style to extra-curricular activities. The American University of Bahrain (AUBH) offers an American-style education, which fosters interaction and collaboration among students, faculty and the professional community. This results in a unique educational journey for students, going beyond what's learned in the classroom. We know that today's challenging job market calls for critical thinking, teamwork, analysis, leadership, entrepreneurship and generally "learning to learn."

We go beyond textbook knowledge acquisition to create tools and real-world situations, where critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving are tested, and put into practice. A one-size-fits-all approach does not create an extraordinary graduate. Our students are introduced to non-traditional educational settings such as workshops, studios, internships, and real-world case studies that allow them to observe, model, apply, and master what they are being taught. Our curriculum is also very flexible, so if a student discovers new interests in the first two years at our University, they will be supported to find their true passion within our dynamic programs.

On an experiential level, we know that the learning environment can influence creativity and positive student outcomes. With this in mind, our oasis-like, modern, technologically enhanced campus was born. AUBH's 75,000 square meter purpose-built Cam-

pus in Riffa, is a masterpiece of form and function - designed by U.S.-based consultants and architects, Ayers Saint Gross (ASG), specialists in designing educational spaces. Our Campus features 9 purpose-built buildings, the Welcome Center, the Auditorium, the Academic Quad consisting of four academic buildings, the Students Common, the Library, the Soccer Field and the Sports Center. It also features three water features, collaborative lab and smart classroom technology with Clevertouch Technology screens, Google's Alexa enabled-classrooms. The thoughtful and aesthetically pleasing designs, inside and outside, offer a unique educational venue where students, staff and faculty can thrive.

2- Students, who pursue courses offered by foreign universities, here often face accreditation issues from the part of the Ministry of Education. Has your university taken up this issue with the Ministry of Education?

AUBH is proud to be licensed by the Higher Education Council (HEC) of the Ministry of Education of Bahrain. Of course, we aim to fulfill the requirements of HEC, and have received constant advice that allows AUBH to understand and comply with the spirit of the regulatory guidelines. We are also in the process of applying for U.S. accreditation with one of the six U.S. regional accreditors recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), holding the highest level of quality assurance at the institutional level. Having said that, our Students will own locally recognized degrees, with global mobility, and the AUBH quality mark for which we will become renowned.

3- Every University faces shortage of qualified/efficient facul-

ty members. How is your university tackling the issue?

For recruitment of our faculty and staff, we collaborated with global education recruitment firms. They have very specific criteria on credentials and experience in American-style education. For us, it is about finding experts who not only meet our academic credentials requirements, but are also problem-solvers, and self-starters who are passionate, and want to make a difference in the world of global education. They are willing to go the extra mile to ensure AUBH Students are learning and applying the soft skills that are at the heart of our approach. These skills include creativity, critical thinking, constructive inquiry, problem-solving, decision-making, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy to name a few. Supported by the Kingdom's visionary plan on education and Bahrain's key position as the "Best Place for Expatriates" (2019 InterNations Expat Survey), international faculty will seek out roles at AUBH. I look forward to working with some of the best educators in the world on our state-of-the-art, innovative Campus.

4- Could you tell us about the admission process/ qualifying exams and scores?

We accept students from various local and international edu-

cation systems, giving AUBH a diverse and multicultural student body. The admissions requirements are an overall GPA of 75% or equivalent, and an IELTS score of 6 or equivalent. There is great emphasis on the personal interview element of the admissions process, as motivation is important to be successful at AUBH and thereafter in the employment market. So, in the interview process, we look for creative and talented young people with an entrepreneurial spirit, and most important an enthusiasm for their education and what it will allow them to do with the rest of their lives - this defines the perfect AUBH candidate.

5- Does the university offer scholarships to meritorious Bahraini students?

Yes. We have scholarship support from the Ministry of Education, the Bahrain Defense Force, and other local sources. We look forward to corporate and additional governmental scholarships in the next year as well. For our inaugural class of 2023, we have already granted scholarships to students who I believe embody the AUBH mission, vision, and passion. They went through a rigorous evaluation process, comprised of faculty, administrators and our Provost. The Students were selected based on their exemplary academic performance, personal achievements, and motivation to succeed in an American-style environment.

6- What are the research facilities offered by the university in various disciplines?

We presently have a dual-floor library at the heart of the Campus. It can accommodate over 200 simultaneous users in both shared and private study spaces and meeting rooms. As well as being an e-resource center, it houses text and reference books, and periodicals in individual sections. Faculty, Students, and Staff can access over 170,000 of the latest international e-books,

research papers and more than 25,000 e-journals in different languages as part of AUBH's ProQuest offering. There are also several study areas with computers for downloading research papers, e-journals, e-books, and other reading material.

We have labs for chemistry, physics, and biology, plus a well-equipped IT lab to support research. In the planning stages are a media lab for AV and production work, a mechanical engineering lab, and a space built specifically for students of architecture. We also have several hundred square meters planned as an Innovation Hub that can be utilised for any business partner relationships that we may develop over the next several years. Our programs contain elements in which research will be key, and students will manage their own research projects independently.

7- Looking forward, what are the university's future plans?

We plan to continue to support the Kingdom's 2030 vision by maintaining quality in our educational programs with a strong emphasis on soft skills and a replication of an American-style experience. This provides an option for students who finish secondary education and would normally look to continue learning in the United States or the UK or elsewhere. AUBH provides a viable and accessible alternative to moving to another country where students get the highest quality education and academic credits that are mobile, preparing them to work around the globe or in Bahrain, whatever their choice. This approach allows AUBH to graduate employment-ready students and positively impact local and regional economies. To further demonstrate our commitment to quality education and student experience, we are currently seeking U.S. regional accreditation, and are exploring affiliations with U.S.-based academic institutions.



Dr Susan E Saxton



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