



Dartmouth-AUKuwait Internship Program

Intern Newsletter – Fall 2018

Allyson Gaines '21



After Morocco: Adjusting to Life In Kuwait

I began my internship at the American University of Kuwait just one week after completing an Arabic study abroad program in Rabat, Morocco. I believed that I would find many similarities between the two places, considering they are both Arabic-speaking countries in the Middle East/ North Africa region. The experiences I had in these two locations could not have been more distinctive. I am very glad I participated in both programs because I learned so much.

The most apparent difference between my experience studying abroad in Morocco and my internship at the American University of Kuwait was the living situation. In Morocco I lived with a host family, including a wonderful mother who cared for me as her own. In Kuwait, I shared a small apartment with another Dartmouth student, Hannah, who was also in Morocco. The roommate style of living was similar to what I became accustomed to during my first year in Hanover, but cooking, doing dishes, and coming up with creative ways to spend the weekends added a new dimension — both challenging and rewarding. Never before had I been required to act so independently. I surprised myself, however, with how quickly I fell into my new routine. On most weeknights, Hannah and I alternated doing dishes and preparing dinner. Our general rule of thumb was “I cook, you clean.” Together we created a pleasant living situation.

In distance, Kuwait is farther away from my home in the United States than is Morocco, but the culture of the country, particularly at the American University of Kuwait, felt similar to me. Salmiya, the area of Kuwait where I spent most of my time, resembled in many ways the suburban communities near Atlanta where I grew up. In both places the streets are lined with restaurants and shopping complexes, people drive a variety of cars, and it is a thirty-minute drive to the city center where many people go to work or enjoy leisure time on the weekends. After the first two weeks in Kuwait, I felt comfortable walking to work or the grocery store, a feeling that took nearly two months to develop in Morocco because of the constant street harassment I experienced and the crowded streets of the Medina where I lived.

I was initially very nervous about starting my internship placements. I had never held a long term internship position. How do I conduct myself in an adult work environment? Would my bosses help me acclimatize to the job? As it turned out, the staff in each of my internship placements turned out to be very helpful, and my life as a student transitioned to that of an intern easily. The most difficult adjustment was in my placement at the Center for Continuing Education. There are very few students around the office. It was an intimidating environment to enter, but once I became part of the team I found that my coworkers were extremely nice and I was able to complete my tasks with minimal coaching. I never thought I would know the ins and outs of entrepreneurship trends in the Middle East or the most popular methods of professional



Center for Continuing Education staff and me. (L to R) Ahmad Mammam, Zeid Malas, Kimberly Rozario, Buthaina ALKhubaizi, myself, Heather Rennison, Ibtisam Khalil, Merline Babu , Abdullah Murad

development in Kuwait. Through my research at the Center for Continuing Education I learned about these and so much more.

The American University of Kuwait internship program is a rewarding experience that introduces undergraduate students to the side of the higher education system that staff and faculty see but students ordinarily do not. The program is a phenomenal opportunity to

learn about a new place and grow as a person. This growth occurred not only in my placements, but in the evenings and on weekends. I feel much more independent and have discovered new sides of myself. Despite some bumps along the way, my experience in Kuwait was a positive and enjoyable one. My accomplishments in the program far outweighed any difficulties I encountered.



Hannah and me saying goodbye to Tadd Kruse at the airport.