Dartmouth President Jim Yong Kim was preparing for a speech he was to give later that day when he met with AUK’s newly appointed President Winfred “Win” Thompson on July 29. The two presidents compared notes on the challenges – and the rewards – of leading university communities, and talked about the global nature of higher education in the 21st century.

They also discussed “habits of mind,” the subject of Kim’s address. The second in Dartmouth Presidential Lecture Series, it focused on research documenting the neurological processes that foster brain development. As Kim explained, the mind’s muscles can actually be strengthened through a regimen of intellectual exercise.

Empathy, persistence, curiosity, and meta-cognition (the process of thinking about thinking) are just a few of the habits of mind that spark intellectual growth. “The 18-24 year-old period is far more important and plastic in terms of creating new connections than we ever thought,” Kim said to the Dartmouth sophomores in the audience, adding “You have a strong foundation on which to build. You are at the height of possibility.”

In the dialogue session that followed, Kim responded to a question about the role of the Humanities by referring to his meeting earlier that day with Thompson. Citing AUK’s commitment to the liberal arts, and Thompson’s broad

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Win Thompson
experience in higher education, he said that students need access to a wide range of disciplines to realize their full potential. Critical thinking, he said, is a universal requirement.

Thompson and his wife, Carmen, were hosted by Dartmouth-AUK Project Relationship Coordinator Dale F. Eickelman and Executive Director Laurel Stavis during their three day Dartmouth visit (July 28-30). While on campus, they met with senior university officials, including Provost Carol Folt, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Michael Mastanduno, Associate Dean for International and Interdisciplinary Studies Lindsay Whaley, General Counsel Robert Donin, Dean of Libraries Jeffrey Horrell, and George Cybenko, Professor of Engineering at Thayer School of Engineering. Cybenko hosted AUK Fellow and Assistant Professor of Computer Science Amir Zeid in a Thayer School of Engineering research group from June through early August.

“It was a wonderful opportunity to visit AUK’s partner institution,” Thompson said, “and to speak with so many of the people who have been working with us since the beginning. I was pleased to learn more about the extent of collaboration between our two institutions and delighted to know how much Dartmouth values its relationship with AUK.”

Thompson was appointed the fourth President of the American University of Kuwait after a rigorous international search. Previously Chancellor of the American University of Sharjah (2002-2008) and President of the University of Central Arkansas (1988-2001), he is completing a temporary post as Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs at the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul. Thompson holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in history from the University of Chicago and J.D and LL.M degrees from George Washington University. He assumes the AUK presidency on September 1, 2010.