



## **Dartmouth-AUKuwait Internship Program**

### **Intern Newsletter – Spring 2015**

#### **Alexis Hill '17**



I write this from my desk (yes, I have a desk and it makes me feel very important!) in the Office of Public Affairs at the American University of Kuwait (AUK). I truly can't believe how fast my time here has passed. I initially decided to pursue this internship to learn about the Gulf, improve my Arabic, and do something a world apart from my routines in Hanover. I was unsure about what I would actually be doing at AUK or how my time here would specifically forward my academic and professional careers, but the flexibility and sort of mystery of the internship description drew me in.

I arrived in Kuwait several days before Charlotte, the other Spring 2015 Dartmouth intern, bleary from travel and highly overstimulated by new sights. What struck me first was the abundance of Western businesses and prevalence of English both on signs and spoken around me. When I got to the apartment in Salmiya, a lively area near Kuwait City, where the University is located, I shamelessly took the bigger bedroom and began to unwind.



*A sunny day on our street*

During the first few days of my time in Kuwait I explored the blocks surrounding our new home: shopping for groceries at the Salmiya Co-Op, walking on the path along the Arabian Gulf and trying to avoid the many stray cats. Over the course of my stay, I learned that walking is not common in Kuwait - crossing streets can feel like the most dangerous thing you've ever done, sidewalks are not always available, and signaling is more of a guideline rather than a hard-and-fast rule for drivers.

I started work at AUK that Sunday (it took me nearly my entire stay to adjust to starting the week on Sunday and ending on Thursday) in three different departments: the Office of Public Affairs, where I would spend most of my time, the Intensive English Program (IEP), and the Department of Arabic and Foreign Languages.

My duties were varied in Public Affairs. I wrote press releases, organized PR requests, proof read content, and attended events. My supervisor, Rehab El Bahey, was one of the most welcoming people I met in Kuwait, and I often found myself losing track of time chatting with her about anything and everything. I loved the variety of experiences and backgrounds in PR; it seemed like every other week was someone's birthday and cause for an hour-long celebration of eating and swapping stories in a mixture of English and various Arabic dialects (everyone in the office seemed to be from a different country). A portion of my working hours was allotted to events, giving me the chance to attend lectures and presentations, including talks hosted by the Center for Gulf Studies, a lecture by Nobel laureate Sir Richard Roberts and a nationwide art competition at a glamorous ocean-side venue.



*Waterfront from the C Club Art Competition*

My time in the Intensive English Program (IEP) was always exciting. For most of the internship, the two classes I worked with, under the supervision of Professor Alison Koushki, were preparing for the IEP Academic Showcase. The students were to perform a theatrical rendition of Jane Austen's *Pride & Prejudice*, complete with three dance numbers, two marriage proposals and one controversial slap. I also helped Professor Koushki in class, and with grading of assignments and assessments.

My third placement was in the Department of Arabic and Foreign Languages, where I split my time between helping Professor Viviana Peiretti with her Spanish 101 and 102 classes and Professor Maher Tamimi with his Arabic 101 class. I worked as a Teaching Assistant for both - tutoring students, creating

and marking assessments, and learning strategies for teaching foreign languages. I also had the chance to help give some speaking exams for students in the Arabic class!

Although I especially enjoyed getting to know the students in my classes, my favorite memories from the last few months included things I did outside of AUK - mostly events and sights recommended by people I met. Charlotte and I became good friends (we didn't know each other at Dartmouth). We travelled and explored together and were both eager to try new things, especially food. Charlotte and I quickly discovered that if we really wanted to know what to do on the weekends, it was to look on Instagram! Some students and faculty members showed us the ropes and we learned where to find the happening events, including local food events, yoga in the park and a discussion and live music hosted by the Spanish embassy.



*View from the waterfront by the Kuwait Towers*

As a small country with challenging summer temperatures, a common activity for people to escape the heat is to head for one of the many malls in Kuwait on weekends. A memorable day for us, though, was the discovery of a pop-up farmer's market in Salmiya. People in the neighborhood turned an empty clearing into a beautiful community space they called The Secret Garden. There was live music, local food stalls, including cooking from one of Charlotte's coworkers at AUK, and lights strung through the trees. It was a lovely change of pace from the malls and the perfect temperature at night to sit outside and enjoy fresh food and good company.

Another experience Charlotte and I had while in Kuwait was unforgettable for us. My supervisor in the Intensive English Program arranged for Charlotte and me to accompany her to the wedding of the sister of a previous student. It was beautiful, held in an ornate wedding hall, and followed by one of the best buffet dinners of my life. As is the custom in Kuwait, the wedding started out separated by gender, and



we danced with the other women in the traditional Gulf wedding style: up and down a sort of aisle in front of where the bride sits, to loud and lively music. I had a wonderful time and won't forget the transformation of the sea of colorful dresses to nearly all black as the women covered for the entrance of the male guests.



*Charlotte and I attend a wedding in Kuwait*

I hope to return to Kuwait soon – to visit the people that made my time so special and to keep exploring and learning about the country and its history. I am nothing but grateful to everyone who made my internship possible and I hope Dartmouth and AUK can develop even more projects and programs together to improve cross-cultural understanding and enrich our academic experiences.