



An Invitation to Apply for the Position of
President
of the
American University of Kuwait

The successful development of higher education is not a matter of choice for our region, but rather an imperative that promises to break the status quo...

- Sheikha Dana Nasser Al-Sabah
AUK Founder and Board Chair

The Search – Executive Summary

The American University of Kuwait (“AUK”), a privately endowed and operated, co-educational institution of higher education located in Kuwait City, is seeking an experienced and gifted leader for this young, exceptional university. AUK was established by Amiri Decree 139 in 2003 and was accredited in 2006 and re-accredited in 2008 by the Council for Private Universities (“PUC”), Ministry of Higher Education of the State of Kuwait.

As an independent, private, liberal arts institution of higher education, dedicated to providing students and scholars with an enlightened, progressive and diverse academic experience within a dynamic, globally-focus culture, AUK has established a clear vision for a community and society of life-long learning. The presidency of AUK offers an outstanding opportunity for leadership and service to develop AUK as the leading liberal arts institution in the Gulf Region, preparing students for the challenges of the new century through the enhancement of critical thinking, effective communication and respect for diversity.

The progress that AUK has achieved and the contributions it has made to Middle Eastern society in its first five years are remarkable and unprecedented, demonstrating the power of a compelling vision to create an institution of higher education that is both indigenous and meets the highest international standards. Preparing young people for the change that

they will have to face as Kuwait and the entire Gulf Region pivot from an oil-based economy to a knowledge-based society is nothing short of revolutionary. The next AUK President will have an extraordinary challenge to lead a dynamic institution into its next, critical stage of growth and evolution.

The founders of AUK established an audacious and singular mission for the new university, which began admitting students in 2004 and in June 2009 celebrated the graduation of its second class who completed the entire four-year undergraduate cycle: *The American University of Kuwait is a liberal arts institution based on the American model of higher education. It is dedicated to providing students with knowledge, self-awareness, and personal growth experiences that can enhance critical thinking, effective communication, and respect for diversity. AUK seeks to create leaders and life long learners who aspire to the highest standards of moral and ethical responsibility in their societies.*

With a current enrollment of approximately 2,000 students and 80 faculty, AUK is Kuwait's first private liberal arts college, offering twelve (12) undergraduate degree programs (BBA, BA and BS), as well as an excellent Intensive English Language Program (IEP) and certificate programs at its Center for Continuing Education.

AUK offers students a quality education based on an American college model. The faculty, administration, and staff work hard to create a caring environment where every aspect of a student's development receives attention and support. Students at AUK are actively involved in student life programs, from clubs and organizations to leadership and service. AUK also offers distinctive programs of academic and personal support to its students. The course of study is designed to prepare students for the contemporary world where critical thinking, communication skills, and life-long learning have become imperative.

This is an exciting and unique opportunity for an experienced academic administrator to lead an important national and regional institution whose graduates will compose an important part of the civic and business leadership for the country of Kuwait and the Gulf region and beyond. The successful candidate will need to represent the best of the values of American liberal arts education, display excellent managerial skills as well as cultural sensitivity. It will take a clear commitment to excellence, formidable managerial skill and the capacity to model the very best of civic leadership.

AUK has engaged the services of Isaacson, Miller, a U.S.-based executive search firm, to help the university with this important search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be sent to Isaacson, Miller at the address and in the manner indicated at the end of this document. All inquiries will be held in strict confidence.

American University of Kuwait and Higher Education in the Gulf Region

Higher education is rapidly expanding in the Middle East as students, their parents, and the region's governments seek to prepare the next generation for a rapidly changing

world in which the Middle East will play an ever-important role, and where the traditional model of sending a relatively few, privileged students abroad for their college education is being challenged.

On the supply side, institutions of higher education, attracted by the prospect of increased demand and financial resources, are responding and in some cases over-responding, to this evolving market, not just in the Gulf Region, but worldwide. No fewer than 78 United States-based universities now have branch campuses worldwide, and other major “exporters” of higher education include the British, French, Indians and Australians. In the Gulf Region, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) alone hosts 40 foreign universities, while Qatar has 9 foreign university branches operating in a country about the size of Connecticut. In addition, the state universities, which have largely been geared to train the engineers, business leaders and other professionals for the region, are adapting to these newer and developing demands.

Amidst this proliferation of new institutions, AUK is distinct. AUK is indigenous. It was founded by Kuwaiti citizens and is operated by the United Education Company, a Kuwaiti owned corporation. It is an “American” university because Kuwaitis have chosen to designate it as such. AUK also aspires to the highest standards of academic excellence. It is accredited by the State of Kuwait and now seeks international accreditation and has undertaken significant steps in that direction. It is based on the American-style of interactive teaching, and is dedicated to scholarship and critical inquiry. The leaders at AUK are engaged in a difficult and exciting enterprise of balancing and blending the demand for professional studies with the need for liberal arts or general education that forms the basis of life-long learning. Most of AUK’s faculty have received their advanced education in the United States and Europe, but are committed to extending their scholarship and their teaching within the Gulf Region in general and in Kuwait in particular. All instruction at AUK is in English and at present it is a non-residential college.

AUK is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees. The Executive Committee is composed of the three AUK co-founders: Sheikha Dana Nasser Sabah Al-Sabah, Mr. Meshal Ali, and Mr. Wael Abdul-Ghafoor and is particularly active and interacts with the President on a regular basis. It is an impressive Board strongly dedicated to the mission of the institution and well positioned to advance the university’s objectives including the financing of a larger campus. Consistent with Kuwaiti law, which does not have U.S.-styled “nonprofit” corporations, AUK is operated by the United Education Company, a privately held concern owned by the co-founders.

The President will work closely with the Board, particularly the Executive Committee to implement best policies and practices and oversee the general management of the University. Unlike most private college presidencies in the United States, which are largely externally focused, fundraising at AUK is not required nor expected of the President of AUK. While the President will interact with local Kuwaiti officials, much of the relationship building and political development will be facilitated by the Board, freeing the President to work principally on setting in place good administrative practices

internally, hiring talented staff, recruiting outstanding faculty, enrolling the most qualified students, and pursuing US accreditation.

The current President of AUK, Dr. Marina Tolmachëva, will be stepping down at the end of the calendar year, and the Board of Trustees has appointed Dr. Tim (Earl) Sullivan as Interim President to serve through the remainder of the academic year. Dr. Tolmachëva has served as President of AUK since the Spring of 2005, having been elevated from her prior position of Academic Dean at AUK. Dr. Sullivan has many years' experience as a leader in higher education, most recently as provost at the American university of Cairo which he left in 2008.

Kuwait is located on the northwestern edge of the Persian Gulf and is a hub in the Middle East region, easily accessible to and from other urban and academic centers such as Amman, Beirut and Cairo. An independent nation since 1961 with a population of roughly 3.1 million in an area of 17,818 square kilometers, Kuwait's government is constituted as a constitutional emirate with a popularly-elected parliament. During standard time, Kuwait is 8 hours advanced of the Eastern time zone in the U.S.

The Academic Program

The AUK faculty is a highly qualified group of international academics with first-hand experience of the U.S.-style of higher education. There are over eighty (80) faculty members, including over 50 undergraduate faculty with Ph.D.'s. With a class size from 10 to a maximum of 32 students, it is easy for students to get to know their professors and classmates.

AUK currently offers twelve (12) bachelor-level degree programs.. In general, 120 credit hours are required for a bachelor's degree and at least 45 of these credit hours are general education credits, insuring a broad-based, liberal arts background for all students. The University offers a wide range of specializations in the Arts and Sciences and Business programs, as well as opportunities for double majors, minors and electives in a variety of disciplines. AUK has been licensed by the PUC to grant two bachelor's degrees in engineering and AUK is in the process of developing these programs.

The University also offers a rigorous Intensive English Program in order to prepare students to attend AUK. This 16-week academic program provides twenty hours of classroom instruction and 5 hours of lab per week for students who need to significantly improve their English to study at AUK, whose professions require a mastery of the English language or who simply desire to improve their English language skills. The program includes instruction in grammar, speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Approximately 70% of the undergraduate students are from Kuwait and most of the remaining 30% from other nations in the Gulf Region. The enrollment of men and women is nearly equal with slightly more women than men in the current classes. The

university is largely dependent on tuition revenues and the vast majority of students enjoy generous government scholarships. Under PUC regulations, which adhere to local customs and law, classes are segregated by gender, which puts additional scheduling and teaching burdens on faculty and administrators alike.

The Campus

The AUK campus is located in Salmiya, one of Kuwait's residential districts. The campus occupies land that formerly housed a public school. The campus was completely rehabilitated, renovated and rebuilt; new buildings and facilities were added in order to bring the university up to standards for its September 2004 opening. In 2006, a five-story building for the Liberal Arts was opened.

The design of the university campus is open and airy, with a large green square enclosed by single-story buildings housing offices and classrooms for the Intensive English Program. Other major buildings include a four-story building for the Sciences, the AUK Library and a student center, a traditional Kuwaiti-style tent which offers students plasma televisions, pool tables, and a social hub to interact and relax. Also available is an American-style diner, a Starbucks and one other café called La Maison du Café. Athletic facilities include tennis, basketball and volleyball courts, as well as a soccer field. The university plans to either expand the current campus or acquire land to build an alternative campus elsewhere.

AUK and Dartmouth

The American University of Kuwait (AUK) and Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire (USA), have worked closely together since 2003, when the two institutions signed a Memorandum of Understanding that facilitated a series of advisory, consultative, and cooperative projects. That initial agreement was renewed in June 2008 to extend through 2013. The two institutions share a commitment to excellence in higher learning, and the agreement between them reflects AUK's growing stature as a premier academic institution in the Gulf Region and beyond. With its deep and historic commitment to the liberal arts, Dartmouth recognizes the importance of AUK's mission and works to support the university as it develops a superlative education, based on the principles of critical inquiry, mastery of subject material, depth of curriculum, and a vibrant out of the classroom experience.

Dartmouth and AUK collaborate on numerous programs, and Dartmouth provides a wide range of administrative and academic consulting services to AUK. The two institutions have developed a flourishing relationship that involves faculty, students, and staff in both locations. Dartmouth experts in engineering, information technology, library sciences, communications, governance, and other areas routinely visit Kuwait while students, faculty, and staff from Kuwait travel to the United States to work with their counterparts at Dartmouth. AUK's commitment to providing a premier learning environment based on the American model resonates with Dartmouth's history and its understanding of the

importance of higher learning in a global context. Since the relationship began, the two institutions have steadily deepened and expanded their partnership, creating a dynamic, evolving, and unique cross-cultural collaboration.

The Challenges and Opportunities for the President of AUK

Despite an unprecedented level of success, as a six-year old institution, AUK is understandably still developing, and the challenges facing the next AUK President are unlike those of earlier leaders, who were charged with envisioning a new university and bringing it into existence. AUK has reached the next level of maturity and it and its next President face the following significant challenges and opportunities.

Management and Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities – Executive leadership capacity and administrative competence are critical and represent the foremost challenges for the next AUK President. Defining and adhering to clear roles and responsibilities among the corporate owners of the university, its Board of Trustees, the President, the President’s Administrative Cabinet, and the faculty leaders, so that the administrative staff, faculty and students understand how decisions are made and how these will be enforced are very important. In order to meet this challenge, we are looking for someone who has been a successful leader of a comparable, complex institution, probably, but not necessarily, a college or university.

Strategic Planning - Refining and Promoting the Profile of AUK as a Unique Institution in the Gulf Region – There are many new and evolving institutions of higher education in the Gulf Region, all competing for the top students, accomplished faculty and financial resources. Some of these are supported by the Kuwait government, others are privately owned or controlled. Several have been planted in the region as branches or “off-shoots” of other, largely U.S.-based, universities from outside the Gulf Region. Many have resources far greater than AUK, and all must comply with government ministry rules and regulations (such as those promulgated by the PUC), that often impinge on their pedagogical independence. Within this complex, ever-changing, and intensely competitive environment, the challenge for the next AUK President is to lead AUK stakeholders in a strategic planning process that results in a clear definition of AUK as a private, Kuwaiti-based, globally focused, student-centered, high quality, liberal arts university that fosters life-long learning and critical-thinking and prepares students for success in the 21st century. To meet this strategic planning challenge we are seeking an academic leader who has vision and the ability to encourage all members of the AUK community to participate in the strategic planning process and then adhere to its results.

An additional, related challenge for the next AUK President is to translate this definition into language that resonates in Kuwait and the Gulf Region, so that people outside AUK come to understand the university’s mission and accept AUK as a valuable resource for the country and the Region. In this sense the next AUK President must be a promoter and marketer of AUK as a rich asset for the Middle East and its people.

Securing U.S. and International Accreditation – Also at the top of the agenda, once the first two preliminary challenges are in the process of being met, is the continuing challenge of securing accreditation for AUK in the U.S. and international context in which the university operates. The goal here is not to replicate in all respects the characteristics of other colleges and universities, but to find a way to give greater value to the degrees that AUK confers on its graduates and to use that accreditation to further advance its mission in the competitive environment, while maintaining AUK’s unique and valuable character. In order to meet this challenge, we need to look for candidates who have experience, or at least reasonable familiarity, with the accreditation process, as well as the diplomatic and negotiating skills to “thread the needle” where necessary between the demands of U.S. and international accreditors and the mandates of the PUC.

Implementing the Plans for a New AUK Campus – AUK is growing and has plans to expand its campus. Having a new president who can lead the university community to plan for this change, accept this change, and make it work successfully is an important criterion as well. Much of the resource-development and governmental approval for this expansion and potential move will be the responsibility of the corporate owners of AUK and its Board of Trustees, but the next president has an important role to play in aligning the university community behind the endeavor to make it successful.

Desired Qualifications and Experience for the President of AUK

The presidency of the American University of Kuwait represents an enormously important opportunity to lead a unique institution at a critical time in its young history, and to have a demonstrable impact on the lives of its students, and the long- term strength of the university, the country and the region.

To help it succeed, the University seeks a president who is:

- An experienced academic manager with proven ability to build a strong team capable of planning and implementing the complex and detailed academic, administrative and development projects that will be essential to AUK’s success.
- A respected and capable academician him/herself able to provide overall academic vision and management to the University. Although the next President need not be a leading scholar in any particular discipline, it is expected he or she would have previously been tenured in his or her discipline at a past academic institution and be tenurable in one of AUK’s disciplines.
- A capable manager who understands the core academic and financial drivers of the university, and who can work closely with the Board, faculty, administration and other constituents.

- An accomplished professional with international interests and experience. A prior knowledge of Kuwait or the Gulf Region or experience working in predominantly Islamic country would aid a candidate, but is not essential. What is required is a deep cultural sensitivity: a respect for and ability to work within Kuwaiti culture and society. While Kuwait is highly cosmopolitan, there will be different cultural expectations compared to the United States (or elsewhere). The next President of AUK would be expected to be aware of and honor the local cultural and legal expectations.
- An effective advocate for the liberal arts who is knowledgeable and appreciative of the strengths of an American undergraduate experience and outreach programs and their essential contributions to the quality of lives of the students and the region and nations they serve. An individual that understands the significance of AUK's partnership with Dartmouth College, is committed to honoring the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions, and to deepening and expanding their collaborative efforts.
- A person of enormous energy and curiosity, a risk taker, a pioneer, a person who is driven by mission and the commitment to make the world a better place.

Application Procedure

Please direct all inquiries, nominations and applications in confidence to Sheikha Dana Nasser Al-Sabah, Chair, Board of Trustees, American University of Kuwait, in care of Isaacson, Miller. Applications should include a resume and cover letter addressing the challenges of this position along with references in confidence to:

Tim McFeeley, Director
Sean Farrell, Managing Associate
Isaacson, Miller
1875 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 710
Washington, D.C. 20009
3864@imsearch.com

Electronic submissions are strongly encouraged.

Candidates from all backgrounds are encouraged to apply. AUK welcomes a diverse pool of candidates for this search.