To: Dean Randall Woods, Fulbright College of Arts and Science  
From: Mounir Farah, MEST Associate Director and Director of Outreach and External Relations  
Re: 1999-2000 MEST Accomplishments  
Date: August 21, 2000

The King Fahd Middle East Studies Program took great strides during the 1999-2000 academic year. Please, excuse the lateness in preparing this report. It was a consequence of my travels this summer to Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, and South Korea, as well as a pressing publication deadline.

Associate Dean and MEST Interim Director Professor Charles Adams and I, with support from most of the MEST faculty members, worked closely together to make sure that the MEST Program continued to grow. Our international profile is high and our national reputation has been greatly enhanced. Your support has been invaluable.

**Majors and Minors**  
In June of 1999, the total number of students who had declared either a major or a minor in Middle East studies was 14. By May 2000, the number rose to 36 and by July 2000 incoming new students brought the number to 48. Active recruitment, student advisement, and the high profile of MEST nearly quadrupled the number of MEST students in one year.

**Brown-bag Lunch**  
We instituted a brown-bag lunch series which was coordinated by Professor Najib Ghadbian. Between 30-40 students and faculty members attended each one. Following is a list of the topics and speakers:

"Words of Gold: Egyptian TV, Tarek Allam and Me" by Professor Joel Gordon

"Nizar and Balquis: A Modern Arab Love Story" by Professor Mohja Kahf

"Dancing on the Red Lines: Al-Jazira’s Coverage of Syrian Politics" by Professor Najib Ghadbian

"Women’s Status in Jordan" by Visiting Professor Yasin Sarayrah

"Citizenship and the State: Women as Political Markers in Kuwait" by Karry Evans
“Arabs in the ‘World of Music’ Scene” by Professor Ted Swedenburg

Guest Speakers
Egyptian activist Dr. Ahmad Abdalla presented “Human Rights / Childhood Rights 2000 – A View From the Nile.”

H.E. Dr. Othman Al-Rawaf, member of the Saudi Arabia Shura Council (consultative council) and professor of political science, gave two lectures: “The Role of Saudi Arabia in Regional and International Politics” and “The Influence of Islamic Jurisprudence on Saudi Arabia’s Politics and Society.”

Gretchen Warren Prize recipient and notable Arab-American poet Lisa Suhair Majaj recited a selection from her poems to students and faculty members and to members of the Ozark Poets and Writers Collective.

MEST cosponsored, with the Department of Anthropology, a speaker at the Robert Stigler lecture series. The noted archaeologist Robert Murowchick spoke on “New Direction in Collaborative Archaeology.”

Recruitment
During the fall of 1999, we developed a database, which includes all high schools in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Kansas, and parts of Texas. In February of 2000, we mailed over two thousand envelopes containing a MEST brochure, letter with information about our program, and a letter of invitation to prospective applicants. The mailing went to all guidance and social studies department chairs and to every high school principal listed in the database. As a result, we received new applications and raised the profile of our program. Although it is not its main objective, the Model Arab League also served as a good tool for recruitment.

Communication
A new brochure was designed, with assistance from MEST faculty members, to update information about our program. Three thousand copies were printed and nearly 2,500 copies have been distributed in the U.S. and abroad.

We redesigned and updated the information on our MEST website. Linkages to many Middle East studies resources and websites are part of the new website. Input from MEST faculty was invaluable in gathering all the necessary material for the Webmaster. Our website will be continually evaluated and updated.
Outreach and External Relations

Model Arab League
MEST organized and hosted the South Central States Fifth Annual Model Arab League for High Schools. This annual MAL has become nationally renowned and well attended by approximately 180 participants from schools in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wisconsin. Students and teachers spend months in preparation for their roles representing their respective Arab League country. They study issues facing the Arab World and prepare draft resolutions for discussion and passage during the two-day conference. This event is cosponsored with the National Council on US-Arab Relations (NCUSAR) in Washington, DC and its affiliate the South Central States Committee on US-Arab Relations in Fayetteville. The UAF College of Education (CEHP) provided the physical facilities and Education faculty members assisted.

The Keynote Speaker was H.E. Dr. Khaled Abdallah, Ambassador of The League of Arab States in Washington, DC. Previous speakers included diplomats from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

MEST sponsored a UAF delegation to participate in the Southwest Model Arab League for University Students. The university delegation was advised and accompanied by Professor Ghadbian.

Plans for 2001 include two models: the Sixth Annual Model Arab League for the High Schools (March 2-3) and the First South Central States Model Arab League for University Students (March 29-31).

Our own UAF students who participate in the university MAL will have the option of including their preparation as part of the requirements of a political science course that will be taught by Professor Ghadbian.

Teachers' Workshop
We held two teachers’ workshop that we scheduled concurrently with the MAL so that teachers who accompanied their students would be able to take advantage of their visit to UAF. The first workshop focused on “Current Challenges Facing the Arab World.” H.E. Dr. Khaled Abdallah was the resource person. Teachers also discussed how to introduce topics from the Arab World into their social studies courses. The topic of the second workshop was “Using Internet Sources to Learn and to Teach About the Middle East.” Professor Phil Besonen of the Curriculum and Instruction Department led the workshop which was held at one of the Peabody laboratories.

For the year 2000-2001, we plan to hold three workshops: two in Arkansas and one in Oklahoma. The Arkansas workshops will be cosponsored with the Arkansas Council for the Social Studies and area Educational Service Coops. The Oklahoma workshop will be
cosponsored with OU and the Oklahoma Council for the Social Studies and possibly the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

**Annual Elderhostel Symposium**
MEST, in cooperation with the UA College of Continuing Education, organized the Third Annual King Fahd Middle East Studies Elderhostel Symposium. The positive feedback for this and for the two previous week-long symposia is encouraging us to plan either two symposia next year or one followed by a guided trip to one or two countries in the Middle East.

**Networking**

**National**
I continued and expanded our collaborative relation with NCUSAR in Washington, DC and its affiliate the South Central States Committee on U.S.-Arab Relations. We were able to place two of our students in summer internships in Washington, DC during the summer of 1999 and two more students during the summer of 2000. I also nominated one of our non-specialized faculty members, Professor Emilie Sullivan, to go to the Middle East on a Malone Fellowship. She is the ninth Malone Fellow from our campus and the thirteenth from the UA system that we were able to send. The other four were from UALR and UAM. About 90% of the cost of travel and accommodations for Malone Fellows are borne by NCUSAR.

I continue to strengthen our contacts with Amideast, the U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce, and other leading organizations dealing with the Middle East in Washington, DC. Amideast provided us with valuable contacts for recruitment in Jordan and Morocco. Lynn Moseso, the Director of Admissions, and I had informative and fruitful meetings with the directors and staff of Amideast in Rabat and Amman during June 2000. Amideast has offices in most of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Through the Middle East Outreach Council (MEOC), an affiliate of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), we have maintained contacts with all outreach programs at Title VI Middle East studies centers and other outreach programs sponsored by other centers and programs. I am a past president of MEOC.

In November 1999, I participated in the Annual Meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and its affiliates, the International Assembly and the National Social Studies Supervisors Association. I discussed outreach programs and teachers needs and plans for workshops with social studies leaders. I was asked to be the Guest Editor of a special issue of *Social Education*, the major journal for social studies education in the U.S., which will focus on the Middle East.
Arkansas
My collaboration with the Arkansas Council for the Social Studies (ACSS), the State Department of Education, and the Educational Service Coops continued to grow stronger. Their newsletters advertise our activities and they cosponsor workshops and other activities with us. They assisted us in recruiting for our MAL. I am expanding this relationship to include the State of Oklahoma.

I held three meetings and communicated frequently with Middle East faculty at UALR, ASU, and UAM. UALR sent a delegation of observers to our MAL and will collaborate with us in planning workshops in the central part of the State. Two professors from UAM will visit us this fall (2000) to discuss plans for workshops for teachers in the Monticello area of the State. We will also be collaborating with UAPB to plan joint activities in the Pine Bluff area.

Through my contacts, I helped a professor of political science and a graduate assistant from ASU to travel to Yemen in the summer of 2000 and to conduct research in that country.

Through the ACSS email listserv we responded to numerous inquiries from school teachers about the Middle East.

During the year we set up a database, which includes all social studies departments in the secondary schools of Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and parts of Kansas and Texas. This will enable us to expand the base of our contacts and communications with teachers in our region. I intend to expand the database to include departments in parts of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

International

Saudi Arabia
In May 1999, we hosted a distinguished delegation from Saudi Arabia headed by H.E. Dr. Khaled Al-Ankary that included three university presidents and twenty-two deans, chairs, and professors. UAF signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry and four agreements, one each with King Saud University (KSU), King Abdulaziz University (KAU), King Faisal University (KFU), and King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM).

Subsequently, we proceeded with the implementation phase of these agreements. Under the Exchange of Scholars agreement, two professors from KSU (one in physics and the other in education) will spend their sabbatical leaves 2000-2001 at UAF. Professor Al-Dhafari will conduct research in solar energy in the Physics and Electrical Engineering departments. Professor Abdul Muhsin Al-Otaibi will conduct research in global education and educational foundation.
Our Survey and Management of Water Resources Agreement with KFU went into effect in the fall of 1999. James Farley traveled to Saudi Arabia in October 1999. After developing needs assessment priorities, he explored with Saudi specialists sources to fund required projects.

In the fall of 2000, we expect a visit by the dean and the former dean of Economics and Business Administration College at KAU to meet and discuss business programs and accreditation questions with administrators and faculty members at the Walton College of Business Administration. The Dean of the College of Engineering at KAU will also visit us to meet with our engineering administrators and faculty in order to discuss requirements for modernizing the KAU’s College and preparing it for accreditation.

Morocco
In July of 1999, Dean Randall Woods announced that MEST will extend its coverage to North Africa, Turkey, and Iran and eventually to the rest of the Muslim World. Consequently, we made contacts with Moroccan institutions of higher education. In late January 2000, Dean Woods, Professor Charles Adams, and I traveled to Morocco where we were joined by Dr. Othman al-Rawaf, an advisor to MEST. We met with officials at the Ministry of Higher Education, four major public universities, and Al-Akhawayn University. Conceptual frameworks for agreements were developed during the meetings. After the return to Fayetteville, communication continued to refine the points of reference.

In May 2000, the President of Al-Akhawayn University, Dr. Rachid Benmokhtar Benabdellah, visited UAF and signed the agreement between the two institutions. The agreement includes the establishment of a public service and outreach center in the town of Azrou, Morocco. UAF, Al-Akhawayn, and an association of friends of Al-Akhawayn in Saudi Arabia will collaborate to provide services at the center. UAF students and faculty members may use the center for research and provide volunteer service to the community.

In June, after the faculty development delegation had left Casablanca, I met with Moroccan Ministry of Higher Education officials and finalized the draft agreement with the Ministry. The Minister of Higher Education will head a three-person delegation to Fayetteville sometime in October 2000 in order to sign the agreement.

Prior to our January visit to Morocco, I was informed of plans to found an organization for the study of Al-Andalus and for promoting a dialogue between civilizations. The dialogue idea was to counter the concept of “clash of civilizations” as explained by Samuel Huntington. The connection between medieval Iberia and a dialogue between civilizations is the harmony and coexistence between Muslims, Christians, and Jews that prevailed in the peninsula for a good part of the Islamic period. In Rabat we met with some of the promoters of the dialogue idea. They had a strong support among intellectuals and officials in Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries, as well as Spain. I am a founding member of this new organization, and MEST joined as an
institutional member. A constituent meeting of the founding committee will be held in Rabat in late September 2000.

**Study Abroad**

During 1999-2000, forty-two UAF students studied and/or conducted research in the Middle East and North Africa. One student spent his junior year at the American University of Cairo (AUC), one spent the summer of 2000 at AUC doing research on women in the Egyptian civil code, one student spent the spring semester at Al-Akhawayn University, one spent the spring semester in Lebanon researching contemporary Lebanese literature, one student spent the summer between Birzeit University in Ramallah and Gaza interviewing people and doing volunteer work, thirteen students studied intensive Arabic and North African Culture at Al-Akhawayn, twelve students studied urban issues in Jordan in May 2000 under the guidance and leadership of professors William Schwab and Margaret Reid, and twelve students spent the summer with Professor Jerry Rose conducting archaeological research at the UAF-Yarmouk field school in Jordan. Director Dede Long and the Office of Study Abroad provided valuable assistance in coordinating and planning the details of students’ travel.

**Jordan**

In June 2000, I had a number of important meetings in Jordan. The first meeting was with the Director of the Royal Jordanian Geographic Center (RJGC) General Salim Khalifah. Three years ago we signed an agreement with RJGC for cooperation and collaboration between our CAST program and the RJGC for the use and utilization of remote sensing, GIS, and GPS. The agreement established an executive committee, which met once in Fayetteville and once in Amman. Specialists from our CAST program and cartography visited RJGC and Jordanian specialists spent four weeks in Fayetteville in the summer of 1998. The collaboration was of mutual benefit and proceeded on schedule until the fall of 1998 after which nothing had taken place to continue the collaboration. General Khalifah expressed strong interest in resuming the cooperation. The next step is to hold a meeting in Fayetteville for the executive committee in the fall of 2000.

I met with Mazen al-Ansari, founder of Petra University in Amman (PUA). The university which was originally a women’s college now is coed. Former Dean Madison and Associate Dean Cory, and at least fifteen of our faculty members had visited PUA in the past five years. Mr. Ansari, administrators, and faculty members had previously expressed interest in cooperating with UAF and working on an agreement between PUA and UAF. In my meeting with PUA representatives, we discussed steps to draft an agreement whereby PUA students can take their last sixty credits in Fayetteville and receive their degree from UAF and the possibility of sending UAF faculty members to teach courses at PUA for credits given by UAF.

The UAF-Yarmouk University agreement for the archaeology field school in Jordan was renewed, with minor modifications, for five more years. Chancellor John White signed the agreement in Fayetteville in May and President Fayez al-Khasawneh of Yarmouk signed it in Irbid in June. Professor Jerry Rose is the co-director of the field school.
I met with Professor Nabil al-Bashir, Dean of the College of Sciences at the Jordan University for Science and Technology (JUST) and discussed areas of possible collaboration between our two institutions. Three of JUST professors are graduates of UAF and several others did post-doctoral research at our university.

Yemen
Sabri Saleem, Director of the Language and Culture Center in Sanaa visited UAF in November 1999 and discussed plans to enhance our relations with Yemen. Our contacts with Yemen began three years ago when we nominated two of our professors in architecture for Malone Fellowships to Yemen. After their two weeks in Yemen, Professor Marlon Blackwell taught a course that included the architectural heritage of Yemen and took a group of UAF students during the following summer to Yemen.

Former Interim Vice Chancellor and former Dean of Architecture, Professor Dan Bennett, had planned to travel with me to Sanaa last fall but had to postpone the trip until this fall because of his added responsibilities and demanding schedule.

Ambassador of Yemen to the U.S., Abdul Wahab al-Hajri, was very encouraging and supportive of our effort to collaborate with Yemeni institutions and the University of Sanaa in particular when I met him last fall in Washington, DC.

The College of Architecture and MEST have a strong interest in developing a relationship with Yemen. Since Director Sabri Saleem offered to help, we shall seek his support and advise in this matter. We also expect assistance from the American Institute of Yemeni Studies, of which I am presently a member on its Board of Directors.

Faculty Development Trips
This year our faculty development trip included representatives from the Fulbright College, the College of Engineering, the College of Education and Health Professions, the Director of Admissions, and one professor from UAPB. I led the group to Saudi Arabia and Morocco. Our meetings and tours were productive and informative.

Prince Faisal’s Visit
Prince Faisal bin Salman bin Abdulaziz had a one-day visit to UAF in May 2000. Dr. Faisal is a professor of political science at King Saud University, the nephew of King Fahd, and the son of Prince Salman, the influential Governor of Riyadh. We briefed him about our program and answered many of the questions that he raised. After his return to Riyadh, he made very positive and encouraging remarks about our MEST program.
Queen Noor
Through my contacts with the Royal Court in Jordan, I was able to secure a commitment from Her Majesty Queen Noor to be the university commencement speaker at the 2001 graduation.

Graduate students from the Middle East
Our growing relations with ministries of education, ministries of higher education, and universities in the Middle East are leading to an increase in the number of applicants for graduate studies. This is particularly true in Education. Two years ago we had only one graduate student from the Middle East in the CEHP. This year we have nine students: two from UAE, two from Jordan, one from Qatar, and four from Saudi Arabia. The majority are in the PhD program in C & I. Three are females. In addition there are four students from Saudi Arabia at Spring International. We also have five applications for the PhD in C & I that are pending.

CC: C. Adams
    V. Cornell
    P. Griffith
    MEST Faculty