



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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12 PDI Fellows Attend Professional Training Workshop in Washington DC

Kuwait's Ambassador: "I commend you for gaining hands-on work experience with some of America's top companies."

Dr. Adnan Shihab-Eldin: "PDI reinforces the mission of KFAS because it advances innovation and sciences in Kuwait through our youth and the private sector."

Washington, DC – The Professional Development Initiative (PDI), now in its third year, recently hosted 12 Kuwaiti Fellows for a two-day, intensive Leadership Training program in Washington DC. The PDI was inspired and developed by the [Embassy of the State of Kuwait](#), the [Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences](#) (KFAS), Kuwait's [Ministry of Higher Education](#), and the [National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce](#) (NUSACC). More than a dozen American companies have participated in the PDI to date, including such U.S. entities as Boeing, Dow, GE, Intel, and the Museum of Modern Art.

For more information about PDI, please visit: www.pdi-nusacc.org.

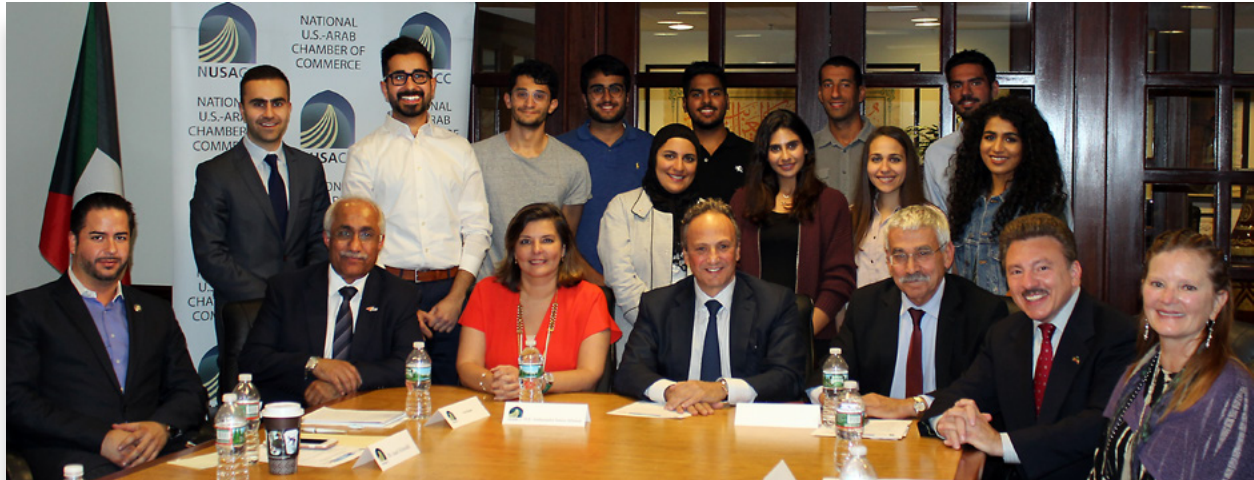
The Fellows were invited to Washington DC from all over the United States to participate in a leadership development course aimed at strengthening their professional skills for the American workforce. The training was attended by the program's senior partners, including: H.E. Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States; Dr. Adnan Shihab-Eldin, Director General of KFAS; Dr. Aseel Al-Awadhi, Director of the Kuwait Cultural Office in Washington DC; Dr. Mohammad Salman, Director of Innovation & Enterprise at KFAS; and David



H.E. Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah (right), Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States, and David Hamod (left), NUSACC's President & CEO.

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Hamod, President & CEO of NUSACC. The program partners opened the training workshop, highlighting the vital role that PDI plays in developing professional potential among Kuwaiti graduates of U.S. universities.



The PDI training included 12 Kuwaiti Fellows and (front row, from right to left): Cynthia Douglass, PDI Director; David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO; Dr. Adnan Shihab-Eldin, KFAS Director General; H.E. Sheikh Salem Al Sabah, Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States; Dr. Aseel Al-Awadhi, Director of the Kuwait Cultural Office; Dr. Mohammad Salman, KFAS Director of Innovation & Enterprise; Ahmad Al Sayed (standing), PDI Manager; and Amin Salam, NUSACC Vice President of Business Development.

Stakeholders Reflect on the Value of PDI

Ambassador Al Sabah welcomed the PDI Fellows, saying, "We have major ambitions for this program, which is a magnet for young people with your drive and strong academic records. This program could help to kick-start the way that Kuwait's private sector does business in the years to come."

The Ambassador went on to say, "The experience that you PDI Fellows are gaining is remarkable, consistent with Kuwait's vision to offer innovative, international experiences to our next generation of leaders." He concluded, "I want to commend you for rounding out your education in the USA by gaining hands-on work experience with some of America's top companies."

Dr. Adnan Shihab-Eldin, Director General of KFAS, congratulated the new Fellows, saying, "I urge Kuwaiti students in the United States to put PDI in their sights from their very first year of university studies, and to work hard to qualify for this highly



H.E. Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah (left), Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States, and Dr. Adnan Shihab-Eldin (right), KFAS's Director General.



Dr. Aseel Al-Awadhi, Director of the Kuwait Cultural Office in Washington, DC.

competitive program.” He went on to say, “KFAS is committed to building the capacity of graduates and contributing to the development of the workforce in Kuwait. PDI reinforces the mission of KFAS because it advances innovation and sciences in Kuwait through our youth and the private sector.”

Oversight of the program in Washington DC is led by Dr. Aseel Al-Awadhi, Director of the Kuwait Cultural Office, which is part of the Embassy of the State of Kuwait. Dr. Al-Awadhi noted, “Back home in Kuwait, the conventional thing to do is to accept a government job. But you PDI Fellows are trailblazers, and you are anything but conventional. You are exceptional.”

Gaining Real-World Work Experience

Host companies employ PDI Fellows for a period of one year, fully immersing them in the firm’s corporate culture. The experience is intended to prepare Fellows for professional advancement but, ultimately, to help them become business leaders of Kuwait’s future economy.

PDI is unique because the Government of Kuwait provides a stipend and health insurance to the Fellows for a full year. There are two “classes” of PDI graduates per year – one in the summer and one in the winter – creating an ongoing pipeline of carefully vetted candidates with degrees in such fields as energy, engineering, finance, information & communications technology, health services, law, management, and the environment.

The connection between the PDI Fellows and their U.S. host companies is very strong:

- “Sarah is a go getter,” noted Boeing Industrial Hygiene Lead Stephanie Wong, a mentor for Sarah Gharib. “She is always looking for new opportunities to improve her learning experience, as well as improve our organization. She is an efficient worker, often completing assigned tasks very quickly, with good quality. Sarah has done a great job so far. We are very happy to have her.” Sarah Gharib-->
- “Mohammed was an excellent team member,” noted Matthew Pettit, a Mechanical Engineering Manager at Detroit-based Ghafari Associates and supervisor for Mohammed AlQallaf. “He was always fully engaged with the team to complete projects and he always wanted to learn more.” Mohammed AlQallaf -->



- “Yazan is incredibly personable,” noted Shahier Rahman, Business Development Manager at 1776 – a Washington DC-based incubator for entrepreneurs – and supervisor for Yazan Alghabra. “There isn’t a person at 1776 who he doesn’t know him by name or is not friends with him. He follows through with his projects, which is a great asset to have in a team member. The most impressive thing about Yazan is his social intelligence, the ability to figure out what our members need and to help them get it.”



Yazan Alghabra

- “Alymamah was an impressive person,” reported John Prochilo, Manager of Drawings and Prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and supervisor for Alymamah Rashed. “She brought intelligence and focus to all of the tasks that were assigned to her. She brought a personable and respectful attitude at all times, and she was very dedicated and interested in everything we gave her. She was a joy to have in the office, bringing enthusiasm with her every day.”



Alymamah Rashed

Yearlong Project Presentations

Every Fellow works on a yearlong project throughout his/her employment year, with a view to “leaving a mark” and creating a measurable legacy for the host company. Here is a sampling of projects undertaken by this year’s class of PDI Fellows:

- **Yousef Ali**, Combustion Design Engineering Intern at General Electric (GE) in Greenville, SC – He improved combustion transition seals through a new methodology he created, which could then be leveraged across all GE product lines.



Yousef Ali (on-screen) presented remotely from the UK about his work at GE. His project improved combustion transition seals through a new methodology he created. He is currently pursuing his Master’s degree in mechanical engineering at the University of Sheffield.

- **Ayoub Ali Ashkanani**, Industrial Engineer at Boeing in St. Louis, MO – He designed a methodology for industrial engineers to use when starting up a new factory, thereby advancing the set-up process and ensuring easy transition for new Boeing factories.

Ayoub Ali Ashkanani presented a mid-year update on his project as an industrial engineer with The Boeing Company in St. Louis, MO. His project helped streamline the start-up process for new factories at Boeing.



- **Yazan Alghabra**, Manager at 1776, a high-tech incubator in Washington, DC – He increased the rating of the Washington DC campus among the global 1776 campuses by improving member engagement, staff member relationships, amenities, the workspace, and quality control.
- **Mohammed AlQallaf**, Mechanical Designer at Ghafari Associates in Dearborn, MI – He created a more efficient way to calculate building load, significantly reducing time in applying design changes, and thereby saving the firm and client many thousands of dollars.
- **Sarah Gharib**, Environment, Health, and Safety Industrial Hygiene Intern at Boeing in Everett, WA – She enhanced the hazard communication program by updating and consolidating hazard communication info sheets and developing a ventilation equipment inventory, thereby laying groundwork for a new software system for hazard communication that is now under development by Boeing.



Brad Barton (standing at right): “Life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to it. Resiliency means we grow because of our failures.”

The yearlong project presentations demonstrate the value that PDI Fellows bring to their respective workplaces. Equally important, these projects highlight the tremendous professional growth that the Fellows experience throughout the PDI year, reinforced by their on-the-job training.

Training Highlights

Acclaimed PDI trainer Brad Barton, Founder of Brad Barton Speaks and author of *Beyond Illusions*, launched his leadership training with these words about the PDI experience: “The



PDI is about getting better . . . getting better personally, in your work, and in your country. In college, you learned data, and you learned how to learn. In the PDI, you will learn your own technical work, and you will learn about your personal brand, who you are as a professional, and what is important to you.”

PDI Fellows at the conference table during the training. From left to right: Saoud (“Sam”) Almulla, Alia Gholoom, Maryam AlZayed, Farah Alkharji, Ayoub Ali Ashkanani, Yousef Alsharif.

Barton worked with the Fellows to define their “narratives” – their perceptions and stories placed upon them by their society, their

community, and their family – noting that until they know what their narratives are, the Fellows will be unable to move forward with their professional goals.

One such narrative that Barton discussed was resilience. “Life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to it,” he noted. “Resiliency means we grow because of our failures.” He concluded, “Things should never be a problem; they should always be an opportunity. The challenges you will face this year could lead you to your finest hour.”



Dr. Ruediger Fox, Founder of the Gross Corporate Happiness Institute, addressed personal development as a core aspect of professional leadership development. He spoke about values intrinsic to the American democracy – life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – and how easy it is to take these values for granted. He suggested that such values are important to the PDI Fellows as they explore ethics and their own core values that drive their business decisions.

Dr. Ruediger Fox: “When we find purpose in the work that we are doing, then work is no longer boring.”

Fox also explored the work/life balance, noting, “Work can be part of our life, part of our growth. When we find purpose in the work that we are doing, then work is no longer boring.” Put another way: Fox noted that when the Fellows begin to align their personal values with the company’s mission – creating an embedded, joint passion – then work/life balance is no longer an issue.

PDI’S Contribution to UN Sustainable Development Goals

PDI’s capacity-building mission fits hand-in-hand with U.S. companies’ efforts to align their core business agendas with those of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Government entities increasingly understand the need for a comprehensive approach to professional development policies, including public private partnerships (PPPs), and PDI reinforces this commitment.

There are many parallels between the goals of PDI and the SDGs. Among them:

- The PDI directly supports target 4 of SDG 4, which is “to increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.”
- The PDI supports target 3 of SDG 8, which is “to promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.”

According to these SDGs, higher levels of economic productivity may be achieved through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including a focus on high-value-added and labor-intensive sectors.



Dr. Mohammad Salman (center), Director of Innovation & Enterprise at KFAS, participated in the PDI training. Also pictured: Alia Gholoom (left) and Maryam AlZayed (right).

At a time when Arab nations are undergoing a historic transition from hydrocarbon-based economies to knowledge-based economies, PDI provides a platform for Kuwait to support innovation. As Dr. Shihab-Eldin of KFAS suggested to the PDI Fellows, “For the first time in history, intelligence is being developed outside of the human. We want you to have an opportunity to work in America so that you may see how U.S. companies are undergoing this transition. Then, we hope you will return to Kuwait and help our country to adopt these innovations.”

Developing Kuwait 3.0

Dr. Mohammad Salman, Director of Innovation and Enterprise at KFAS, participated in the professional leadership training. “With the participation of our PDI partners, we have a lot of hope for the future of Kuwait,” he said. “This program highlights the important role that our young professionals will play in the development of Kuwait 3.0, which will be led by this generation of PDI Fellows.”

NUSACC’s President and CEO, David Hamod, concluded, “Never has there been a better time for a program like the PDI, which is fully dedicated to the next generation of leadership. Our Chamber is honored to be part of Kuwait’s historic transition to a knowledge-based economy.”



All PDI program partners were represented at the annual training, including (from right to left): Dr. Adnan Shihab-Eldin, Director General of KFAS; H.E. Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, Kuwait’s Ambassador to the United States; David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO; Dr. Aseel Al-Awadhi, Director of the Kuwait Cultural Office in Washington DC; Dr. Mohammad Salman, Director of Innovation & Enterprise at KFAS; Amin Salam, NUSACC Vice President of Business Development; Cynthia Douglass, PDI Director; and Ahmad Al Sayed, PDI Manager.

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To learn more about the benefits of membership in NUSACC, please click [HERE](#).

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